# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

**SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 210**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

**SESSION 1992-93**

**COMPRISING PERIOD**
**22 June—3 July 1992**

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02 JUN 1992

ISBN 0 10 681210 6

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FIRST YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 210**

**FOURTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93**


# House of Commons

*Monday 22 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## WALES

### Recession

1. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the impact of the recession *(a)* on Wales and *(b)* on Neath.

**The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt):** The transformation of the Welsh economy over recent years has left it well placed to weather the effects of the recession. All the indications are that the future prospects for the Welsh economy are very good indeed.

**Mr. Hain:** Is the Secretary of State aware that the recession is creating a terrible housing crisis in Wales? People come to my surgeries in tears. One young woman sleeps with her 14-month-old baby on the living room floor of her parents' home because there is nowhere else for her. In another case, two adults, four children and another couple—a total of eight people—live in a three-bedroomed house. Those problems could be solved at a stroke if the Secretary of State would release £500,000 from housing capital receipts funds in Wales and let councils build houses that are so desperately needed. Does the Secretary of State not care about those human tragedies?

**Mr. Hunt:** To put the matter in perspective, the number of housing units built in Wales in the past 10 years has risen by 8 per cent., whereas the population has risen by just over 2 per cent. We are putting increased resources into housing. As the hon. Gentleman will know, Housing for Wales is now building a record number of homes and the prospects are very good.

**Mr. Sweeney:** Will my right hon. Friend welcome the opening by the Cabot factory in Barry of the new silica fume plant, one of the most modern in Europe?

**Mr. Hunt:** Yes, and I was glad that my hon. Friend could be with me on that important occasion—a £48 million investment, promising a state-of-the-art factory and tremendous prospects for the future. Following that opening, the opening of Revlon at Maesteg last week, and the announcement about Northern Telecom, I am glad to announce today an industrial investment package of £28 million involving the planned creation of more than 814 new jobs. I am delighted to make that announcement, which comes as another tremendous boost for Wales.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that unemployment stands at 124,000 and is rising, and that last year 5,500 manufacturing jobs were lost in Wales? Does not the Chancellor's decision to scrap the National Economic Development Council call into question the whole future of the Secretary of State's planned Welsh economic council? Did the Chancellor consult the right hon. Gentleman before he made his statement?

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong. Our plans for the Welsh economic council continue and we shall shortly issue a consultation paper. On unemployment, the figures for the hon. Gentleman's constituency show that in July 1986, 4,274 people were unemployed; in June 1987, the figure had fallen to 3,689; in April 1992, it had fallen to 2,923; and last month, it fell again to 2,855. The prospects for his constituency and for Wales are very good.

**Mr. Richards:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that, were it not for the Government's policies, the impact of the world recession on Wales would have been far more severe?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am delighted that my hon. Friend asks me that question, because we have seen a transformation of Wales in the past 10 years. The offers of regional assistance accepted by employers since 1979 are forecast to save more than 50,000 jobs in Wales and to create more than 100,000 new jobs. The transformation of Wales has secured its future.

## Home Adaptations

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will examine the waiting times for approved home adaptations for the disabled in each local authority in Wales.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones):** Local councils must deal with all applications for disabled facilities grants within six months of receiving them.

**Mr. Wardell:** As renovation grants and adaptation grants for the disabled are usually mandatory under the Housing Acts, why has the Welsh Office discriminated against disabled people by transferring the funding of those mandatory grants from the special credit allowance to the basic credit allowance? That change of policy has effectively ended the ringfencing of a vulnerable group in society. Does not that mean that elderly and disabled people throughout Wales look forward with trepidation to the implementation of the Community Care Act next year?

**Mr. Jones:** I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that there have been no changes to the regulations; the disabled facilities grants remain mandatory. The policy changes give local councils far more flexibility, which is necessary as they need to consider all the options in order to respond effectively. In the current year we have provided £26·3 million to deal with disabled facilities and other grants, compared with last year's expenditure of a little over £7 million.

**Mr. Wigley:** Does not the Minister understand that local authorities in Wales face a crisis which has a knock-on effect for disabled people? Until 31 March, work to renovate houses to an acceptable standard and the installation of disabled facilities was possible in most districts, and the money spent was refunded. Now, as that refunding has come to an end, it is not possible to bring houses for disabled people up to acceptable standards. Disabled people will have to live in dampness and poverty for years to come unless we revert to the original policy.

**Mr. Jones:** As I have explained, we have substantially increased the funding for disabled facilities grants to £26·3 million compared with a little over £7 million. We have made a generous increase in allocation of £80 million for all mandatory home renovation grants, bringing the total figure to £143 million.

## Local Government Services

3. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of county councils in Wales to discuss continuity and quality of local government services in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** On 11 May.

**Mr. Michael:** Does the Secretary of State agree that the two prime requirements for quality of services are, first, democratic accountability through the ballot box and, secondly, continuity so that people know where they are? Do the Government intend to introduce legislation before the recess to cancel or delay next year's county council elections or are they to allow the doubt and confusion to continue?

**Mr. Hunt:** The question about holding elections has been asked of me by the local authority associations, but it is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, not me. It would be helpful if the hon. Gentleman and, more particularly, his hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) could give the Labour party's view on holding county council elections next year. It would also be helpful for other parties to do so, as they would aid my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and me in reaching a decision—*[Interruption.]* It is no use the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) shouting at me—he is still the young pretender and has not yet taken over from his hon. Friend. I should warn him about what they used to do to young pretenders in medieval times—the same fate may well await him.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** When the Secretary of State met council representatives, was he aware of the importance of the trading standards and consumer protection service as the last line of defence between the public and unscrupulous traders? How does he expect a uniformly high standard of consumer protection to be administered throughout Wales after local government reform?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am determined that a high standard should be maintained. I have been greatly assisted in that objective by the fact that we have now been able to establish a number of sub-groups on the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, whose members include representatives of county and district councils, as well as the Welsh Office. I want those sub-groups to work out the best possible way to deliver the services, with the best quality, once we have the new unitary authorities.

## Youth Agency

4. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in establishing a youth agency for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts):** I am pleased to announce that the Wales Youth Agency was established with effect from 1 April this year. The appointment of Mr. Gerald Davies as chairman and Dr. Howard Williamson as vice-chairman was announced on 16 March. Other appointments will be made shortly.

The agency is the successor body to the Wales youth work partnership. It is funded by the Welsh Office under

the powers conferred by the Education Act 1944. It is expected to be fully operational by the autumn. Its grant in 1992-93 will be about £360,000.

**Mr. Evans:** Will my right hon. Friend assist us with an outline of the functions of this agency and what he sees as its principal purposes?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The agency will have three main functions. The first is to secure an effective partnership between all the agencies involved in youth work. Secondly, it will provide training for youth workers and ensure that they are well informed. Its third function will be to ensure that the aspirations of Welsh youth are expressed, and realised if possible. The ultimate aim of the agency will be to improve the quality of life for our young people.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** What proportion of the youths who are now leaving school are finding employment in Wales?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** About 61 per cent. of our young people do not leave school and go to work, partly because we encourage them to stay on at school as we want them to receive further education and training. As for those who go on to training, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that a significant proportion leave training to go to work in due course.

## Trunk Roads

5. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money *(a)* in cash and *(b)* as a percentage of the Welsh total, will be spent on trunk roads in Dyfed in the financial years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Central Government provision for roads and transport in Wales in 1992-93 is £197 million. An analysis by county is not available, as the programme is subject to changing engineering, statutory and financial considerations.

Provision for 1993-94 and 1994-95 will be announced in due course.

**Mr. Ainger:** Is the Minister aware that the analysis by Dyfed county council shows that less than 6 per cent. of the capital from the Welsh Office is spent on the 24 per cent. of the road network of Wales that lies within the county? Is he aware that all the local authorities and the members of the task force on whose strategy team the Secretary of State sits identify the fact that west Wales has serious problems with its road communications? Is he further aware that his answer is wholly inadequate, as are the sums allocated to road communications in west Wales?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Although I do not deny the county council's figures, I should point out that they vary from year to year. In 1990-91, about £22·6 million was spent on motorways and trunk roads in Dyfed—12·6 per cent. of the total spent in Wales. I do not know why the county council should complain. There are nine trunk road schemes in the pipeline for Dyfed, costing about £81 million—five of them to be started before 1995 and four before 1998.

As for expenditure on roads, the hon. Gentleman will know that our expenditure on the M4, in particular on the Baglan-Lonlas section in west Wales, will greatly benefit life there.

## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

6. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on designating new environmentally sensitive areas in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am pleased to announce the designation of four new ESAs—Radnor and Anglesey by the end of this year, and Preseli and the Clwydian range by the end of next.

**Mr. Evans:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement will be very welcome in Radnor and, I hope, in Ynys Môn, which is represented by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones)? Does my right hon. Friend agree that his announcement, when coupled with the common agriculture policy reform package announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, recognises the role of farmers in caring for our countryside? Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that adequate funding will be made available to back the ESA scheme so that farmers are encouraged to join it voluntarily?

**Mr. Hunt:** Yes. First, may I pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who made strong representations—*[Interruption.]* I could stop there—on the importance of placing Radnor as a high priority in the designation of new ESAs? I agree that it is important for those from towns and cities, who come to view the beautiful countryside, to recognise that it is mainly due to the farming community that they are able to benefit from it. However, they must also recognise that they must pay. Therefore, I have allocated £2·5 million to cover those agreements in the coming year.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** May I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement, as far as it goes? Now is the time to develop a far more ambitious and comprehensive system of countryside management. May I press him on two points? First, will the rates payable under the four schemes that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today bear at least some resemblance to the scales that applied in 1986? The Secretary of State will know that those scales have not been uprated and that they have been severely eroded by inflation. Secondly, is it not time to recognise that all farmers throughout Wales should be entitled to the payments, because that is one way to prevent the intolerable level of surpluses from increasing and, at the same time, compensating farmers for the losses that they will incur as a result of CAP reform?

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman's question contains many important points. I recognise that it is vital to ensure that we have the right level of payments. However, one must view that against the overall level of resources available and I believe that the scale of payments announced today will more than meet the present requirements. It is always important to keep an eye on all the various schemes operating throughout Wales. Tir Cymen, the countryside stewardship scheme, is another important one which is getting under way. National parks also play an important part in our strategy.

My announcement will mean that 24 per cent. of rural Wales will be covered by the new ESAs, which comes on top of the schemes for the Cambrian mountains and the extension of the scheme for the Lleyn peninsula. We must

learn the lessons from all that when we decide on which way to proceed. However, I take on board the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

## Severn Bridge

7. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the level of tolls on the Severn bridge.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The Department has received some 54 letters about the level of tolls as provided for in the Severn Bridges Act 1992.

**Mr. Murphy:** Does the Minister agree with the RAC, which said a few days ago that hundreds of motorists make diversions of up to 60 miles in order to avoid paying the tolls on the Severn bridge? Does he also agree with the RAC that the small commercial vehicles that use the bridge should be placed in a different tolling category? Above all, does he agree that the position on the Severn bridge has become, as the RAC described it, "outrageous"? Is not it time that the Minister personally intervened not just for the sake of those who use the bridge but for the sake of the whole Welsh economy?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The hon. Gentleman makes a number of points. On the RAC survey, which suggests that vehicles are being diverted, the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the record of the Severn bridge is one of steady growth in traffic. I believe that that growth will continue and that is why we are providing a second Severn bridge. When the hon. Gentleman refers to small vehicles, I presume that means light vans. There was an unintended ambiguity in the Severn Bridges Act 1992, which we have now sought to clarify with the Severn Bridges (Description of Vehicles) Order 1992. There cannot be a change from the provisions of that Act. My feeling is that matters have settled down since the change in the tolling regime at the bridge. We all look forward to the tolling regime providing the new bridge by spring 1996.

**Mr. Sweeney:** Does not fixing the level of toll at £2·80 make it more difficult to collect the money? Would not it be better to change £3, with a guarantee that it would be pegged at that level for a considerable time? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the present system of charging the owner of a light van who may be using it for private purposes considerably more than the owner of an ordinary car, which may weigh substantially more, is unjust?

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** My hon. Friend is suggesting going against the provisions of the Severn Bridges Act, which was passed by the House. In that Act, the tolling regime is fully provided for, not only now but for the future, until the new bridge is paid for. It also covers maintenance of the existing bridge, and there can be no change of that Act except by the will of the House.

## Water Quality

8. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the National Rivers Authority to discuss water quality in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** My right hon. Friend and his officials regularly have meetings with the chairman and officers of the National Rivers Authority to discuss water quality and other matters associated with the discharge of the authority's functions in Wales.

**Dr. Howells:** The Minister's constituency shares a river with mine, the River Taff. If he is that confident about the quality of the water in the Taff, which I am not, does he agree that improvements to water quality should be speeded up, that we have treated our rivers for long enough as open sewers and that everyone who dumps effluent in the river, including Welsh Water, should be pursued ruthlessly by the NRA and fined? If he is, as he often says that he is, pleased with the improvement in water quality will he come to my constituency, where I promise that I will have my constituents line the banks of the River Taff to watch him take a running jump into it?

**Mr. Jones:** I think that I shall decline the hon. Gentleman's last offer, but I would go along with the general sentiment that he expresses. We all want to see further and continuing improvements. Already, there have been substantial improvements and 94 per cent. of river quality in Wales is at least of a good or fair standard, and that is a net improvement over the last time. I have also noticed that there has been a useful improvement—a significant population of migratory salmon and trout in the Taff—which I should like to see continue.

## Job Initiatives

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new initiatives he plans to introduce to safeguard jobs in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** My Department and the development agencies have in place a number of successful initiatives to safeguard jobs and create new ones.

**Mr. Flynn:** Does the Secretary of State regret the surrendering of the ownership of Inmos from the British to other Governments?

**Mr. Hunt:** Discussions are continuing with Inmos and the European Commission and we still hope that they will come to a successful conclusion, so the hon. Gentleman's question does not arise. I hope that he will take time to reflect on the announcements that I have been able to make today, because they have great significance for his area.

The 13 projects that have been backed by regional selective assistance—RSA—of more than £7 million include a major new project for Flexonics Automotive Ltd. at Crumlin, a new project for Vales Wiper Systems at Ystrad Mynach and another project that is being started by Electronics Manufacture and Test Ltd. at the Llantarnam park industrial estate. All these are good projects and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will reflect on them and realise that we are determined to continue to win new investment as well as taking every possible step to safeguarding existing investment.

**Madam Speaker:** Mr. Roger Evans—*[Interruption.]* As I have such a choice of Evanses, I call Mr. Jonathan Evans.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I am obliged, Madam Speaker.

May I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that his announcement about jobs will be widely welcomed in the Principality, if not by the Labour party? In his role of job creation, did he have any part to play in job creation

for the former Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, who was recently elevated to a position in the other House? As for the safeguarding of jobs, is my right hon. Friend able to offer any advice to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)?

**Mr. Hunt:** First, I should make it clear to the Opposition parties that the Evanses reign supreme on the Government Benches.

I do not want to comment especially on job creation, as I understand that it is a subject which divides one of the Opposition parties. I was personally delighted by the recognition given to the former Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside constantly preaches doom and gloom in the context of the Welsh economy, but the facts speak for themselves. We have had remarkable success. In the 12 months to April 1992, accepted RSA offers have safeguarded 4,868 jobs and created 8,257 new ones.

**Mr. Rowlands:** Has the Secretary of State read the recent report of Mid Glamorgan county council, which shows a huge and growing jobs gap in the county? The area might attract 5,000 jobs during the decade, but even an extra 15,000 would only maintain the present high levels of unemployment. There is talk of convergence of the economies of the Twelve, but it seems that we cannot have convergence in the United Kingdom, or even in Wales between mid and south Glamorgan.

Whatever the achievements that have resulted from the valleys initiative, is it not now time for a major new programme of positive discrimination in favour of valleys development to create a degree of convergence and to make up for the huge jobs gap which has been created and which is growing every day?

**Mr. Hunt:** I read the articles in the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred and I was struck by some of the inconsistencies. For example, it was stated that there had been no inward investment projects in the valleys in the past year, but I know that there have been 20 such projects. I was first told about the report last week when I was in Maesteg opening the new plant for Revlon, which will safeguard 370 jobs and create 188 new ones. The hon. Gentleman will know of the investment by Mayor Sakata and Artec in Merthyr.

The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we need constantly to pay attention to the valleys. That is exactly what my predecessor did in setting up the programme for the valleys. About £800 million will be available over the five years of a programme that has seen the largest land clearance programme in Europe, record levels of investment in factory building, substantial industrial support and urban renewals and many initiatives in training, health care and housing.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** What is my right hon. Friend's assessment of the effectiveness of the Welsh Development Agency in bringing new jobs to Wales? If the agency's work is not welcomed by Opposition Members, perhaps it could come to Dorset and do the same wonderful job for my constituents as it has done for the constituencies of Opposition Members.

**Mr. Hunt:** The WDA does a remarkably good job in its Conservative form. I strongly support the inward investment work that it is doing. I hope that it will not seek to do the same for my hon. Friend's constituents, as that would militate against the impressive work that it is doing in Wales. I am sorry to bring my hon. Friend that sad news.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** With the loss of 5,500 manufacturing jobs last year, is it not clear that Wales needs a much stronger regional policy? Will the Secretary of State pledge that, in the review of assisted area status, Wales will not lose out?

**Mr. Hunt:** That is not a matter for me, but I am determined to do everything possible to secure the future attractiveness of our country for jobs. On the hon. Gentleman's first point, has he not noticed that whereas unemployment in Wales has always been considerably above the United Kingdom average, last month's figures show that, for the first time in more than 70 years, unemployment in Wales is now below the United Kingdom average? That is a reflection of the transformation that has taken place.

## Green Issues

10. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who in his Department has been appointed to oversee and develop green issues; how many civil servants have been allocated new or additional responsibilities to deal with the management and development of green issues; and what additional allocation of resources has been made to support programmes related to green issues in his Department.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has assumed personal responsibility for overseeing the Welsh Office's environmental policies and programmes. The Department's wide-ranging responsibilities mean that environmental issues impact either directly or indirectly on the workloads of all Welsh Office staff. All are encouraged to take the environment into account in their day-to-day work. Full details of the financial provision in 1992-93 for environment programmes are set out in the departmental report published in February.

**Mr. Dafis:** Does the Minister recognise that, following the Earth summit in Rio, ecological sustainability is now fundamental to all economic policy and that that has implications for economic development in Wales? Does he further recognise that west Wales has considerable potential for green developments, not least in renewable energy? What plans does the hon. Gentleman have for promoting such developments—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] Yes, I am reading my notes. What plans does the Minister have for promoting such developments and ensuring that when they occur they will not be an almighty rip-off of the Welsh economy? That has happened many times in Welsh economic life, for example, in opencast coal——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is Question Time; he is making a speech. Will he now come directly to his question, as time is passing?

**Mr. Dafis:** What plans does the Minister have for developing that green potential——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am much obliged.

**Mr. Jones:** I join the hon. Gentleman in welcoming the successful outcome of the Earth summit in Rio. I assure him that the Welsh Office was fully consulted before and during the conference.

On the hon. Gentleman's final point, the work of conserving the Welsh environment is well under way. As he will note in the departmental report, the allocation to the environmental services programme is planned to be £194·5 million, an increase of £21·3 million. In addition, the WDA is carrying through its environmental improvement programme, which involves an increase of £15 million. Cadw's programme is up by £4 million and the programme for the Countryside Council for Wales is up by £3 million.

### Health Service

11. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the reorganisation and development of the health service in Rhondda/Taff-Ely.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** This is principally a matter for Mid Glamorgan health authority at this stage.

**Mr. Rogers:** I understand that Mid Glamorgan health authority has submitted proposals for some capital development around Ynysymwm and other parts of the Rhondda-Taff-Ely area. While we are waiting for those major capital developments, the fabric of the existing buildings—especially Llwynpia hospital—is rapidly deteriorating. Will the Minister make available some emergency funds, in response to my letter to him, so that my constituents do not have to wait for medical treatment in the most appalling conditions imaginable?

**Mr. Jones:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall respond fully to his letter. In the interim, I remind him that the funding of £244 million for Mid Glamorgan health authority in the current year is an increase of 7·2 per cent. —well above the rate of inflation. I hope that that health authority will continue with the successful increases that it has been delivering in improved health care. I especially note that the number of in-patients treated is up 14 per cent. and the number of day patients is up by 42 per cent.

### Housing Associations

12. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the implications for Wales of the findings of the Committee of Public Accounts on the level of monitoring of the working of the financial regime operated by housing associations under the Housing Act 1988.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Detailed monitoring is undertaken by my Department and Housing for Wales on the basis of appropriate data, including that supplied by the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations.

**Mr. Smith:** What advice would the Minister give those of my constituents who live in substandard housing or who are homeless and who, because they receive low wages, do not qualify for a housing association flat?

**Mr. Jones:** As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we will continue the successful work of the past decade, when the number of housing units increased by more than 8 per cent., while the population of Wales rose by only about 2 per cent. Housing for Wales intends to build 4,000 new homes this year, compared with 3,500 last year, which is a good improvement.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Citizens Charter

29. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the application of the citizens charter principles to British Rail.

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave):** British Rail has set out the application of the citizens charter in its own passengers charter. The charter commits British Rail to giving passengers the safe, high-quality service that they have the right to expect. Passengers now know what are BR's standards, and which standards are being achieved.

**Mr. Raynsford:** Does the Chancellor recall that the citizens charter White Paper published almost one year ago contained a clear pledge to reform conditions of carriage, which were described as heavily criticised and more than 40 years old? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall also the pledge that those simple, easy-to-understand conditions of carriage would be published last November? A seven-month delay in arriving seems rather long, even by British Rail's standards. What redress will the Government offer?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** In this matter, it is not entirely British Rail's fault. BR and the Department of Transport have been awaiting the European Commission's work, which appeared to delay matters. My information is that BR will now be able to press on more speedily.

**Sir Anthony Durant:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents will be pleased that any price increases will be linked to the service provided in future? That is important to those who commute to Reading and just beyond it.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** That is a good principle and one which will benefit season ticket holders. The first objective is to ensure that standards that commuters want are met. When they are not, that will be reflected in prices and in compensation to individual holders of season tickets in the preceding year.

**Dr. Marek:** Does the Chancellor of the Duchy believe that the application of citizens charter principles to British Rail should relate to its commercial aspects, or will an element of service be involved? If the latter, where precisely in British Rail should that element of service be found?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The element of service comes in British Rail's managing its business as effectively as possible. As our railways are presently constituted, the Department of Transport is responsible for negotiating that—and under any future privatisation, the regulator would have that role.

**Mr. Rowe:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that British Rail has just put on the market a grade 1 listed building at a price virtually half that which British Rail paid for it? At the same time, BR denies that the blight affecting the properties of constituents of mine who live close to that

building has anything to do with BR. How does my right hon. Friend see those two conflicting attitudes fitting in with the citizens charter?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend will have to await my detailed reply. I do not know the details of the case to which he refers, but I will be happy to pursue it.

### European Research Council

30. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he will make to the European Research Council during the United Kingdom presidency.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** As the presidency, we will prepare the ground for the fourth framework programme, which will define Community research in the years ahead while assessing whether any financing problems that remain from the third framework programme need dealing with. I want to see better management and evaluation of EC programmes. I shall be seeing Vice-President Pandolfi in London tomorrow.

**Mr. Ross:** Does the Chancellor of the Duchy agree that one of the most important steps that the Council could take would be to support the proposed global climate observation system, which would ensure a sound scientific basis for the adoption of environmental policies?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The hon. Gentleman has made a good point. He will be well aware of the initiative launched in Rio by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in this connection, and I shall draw his remarks to the Commissioner's attention tomorrow.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Should we not recommend the ending of all European Community Research funding for fat-cat corporations such as Olivetti, Siemens and Philips, which over the past few years have proved brilliant at lobbying for funding for prestige research products, but less than brilliant when it comes to producing efficient, marketable goods? If they devoted half the effort that they devote to lobbying for protection and research grants to producing such goods, they would be world beaters.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** We firmly believe that individual corporations and products should not receive research support, either from the Community or from our own domestic programme. We should use the European programme to support generic science and strategic science, which can have a wide range of applications, but we should not be drawn into individual industrial decisions of the kind that my hon. Friend rightly criticised.

**Dr. Bray:** Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that the science communities—not only in Britain but in France and Germany—want the European framework research programme to be well supported? Does he propose any steps to bring the national peer groups together, so that, with their pooled wisdom, they can help to improve administration standards in Europe?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I think that there is a role for domestic advice to strengthen the European Community's assessments. At the last Council meeting, I pressed hard for better evaluation of the existing European programmes and received considerable support around the table. We in Britain have a great deal to offer in that direction.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Will my right hon. Friend use the British presidency as an opportunity to keep a beady eye on the expansionist ambitions of President Delors in this regard, as in many others?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Yes, although it should be recognised that Britain receives a good return from European research and development expenditure—a rather better return than under the juste retour formula. None the less, that does not mean that we should not question any unnecessary expansion and ensure that evaluation and assessment of projects are better and tougher than in the past.

### Intestacy

31. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the effect of intestacy on Duchy properties.

33. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider introducing legislation to alter the intestacy provisions in the Duchy.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The laws on intestacy are no different in the county palatine from those in England and Wales.

**Mr. Cohen:** Is not the Duchy of Lancaster running a feudal fiefdom, robbing relatives of their inheritance? Why does not the normal law apply, whereby if someone dies without having made a will, his next of kin, rather than the Queen personally, has a claim to his property? For the sake of natural justice, should not repossessions by ancient statute be stopped immediately—or are we to assume that the Duchy is using its policy to satisfy the monarch's private greed?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question was perfectly acceptable and in order, but I must tell him that no personal criticism can be made of and individual except by way of a substantive motion. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw the second part of his question?

**Mr. Cohen:** My criticism was of the Duchy of Lancaster.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's question was perfectly in order, but factually—you, Madam Speaker, are not responsible for that aspect—it was completely haywire. Opposition Members who take their briefing from the *Daily Mirror* always come a cropper; I have dealt with one or two in the past. The truth is that the law of intestacy is exactly the same in the Duchy of Lancaster as it is everywhere else: there is no difference in the rights of next of kin. The only difference lies in the fact that, instead of all the money going to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it goes to a charitable fund to benefit the people of Lancashire. Some hon. Members may well support that.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Does the Chancellor of the Duchy accept that many of us have no wish to join the republican rat pack led by Rupert Murdoch and Andrew Neil, who unfortunately, is a Scotsman? There is growing and genuine concern that although the civil list provides a very generous income and although the monarch is exempt from tax, the estate goes to the Queen personally when people die intestate in the Duchy of Lancaster and have no

heirs, and not to the Crown, as represented by the Government. Many people believe that that anomaly ought to be dealt with. Will the Chancellor consider introducing legislation to change that procedure, because otherwise it will continue to reflect adversely on the monarch?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I thought at first that the hon. Gentleman, whose question is more accurate, was referring to his hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who got it all back to front. At least the hon. Gentleman more or less knows the facts. In the following respect, though, he is wrong. Instead of the money going into the Consolidated Fund for general use by the Government, it goes into a benevolent fund which benefits a range of charities—above all, for example, Salford and Lancaster universities, Blackburn cathedral and Broughton Hall disabled ex-service men's home. There are also very small grants, including that to pay for driving lessons for an 18-year-old suffering from spina bifida and a contribution towards a powered wheelchair for a sufferer from muscular dystrophy in Lancashire. Many of us think that the Duchy, through its benevolent fund, does very good work and that it should receive support in the House.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** I thank my right hon. Friend for confirming that not one penny of this money is kept by the Duchy and that it all goes to charitable uses within the Duchy, a fact that all properly informed Lancashire Members have always been well aware of.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I did think that it was somewhat rash of these foreigners to interfere in my hon. Friend's area. I thought that she would dispose of them—as she has done. I would correct her, however, on one small point. Part of the money is spent on the administration of the magistracy. If, however, it were not spent in that way, money would have to come out of the self-same public funds into which the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) wants all the funds to go, so that it is an entirely circular argument.

**Mr. Sumberg:** Is it not ironic that, whenever we have Scottish questions, Scottish Members such as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) complain about English Members interfering, but now that we are considering Lancashire affairs, the hon. Gentleman is poking his nose into them? Would not the best advice to people in Lancashire who are affected in this way—I speak with no special interest—be to go to see a good lawyer if they have a problem?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend's latter point is sound. Previous Scottish invasions got to Derby, but on those occasions they did not try going through Lancashire.

## Academic Research

**Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what balance he proposes for funding academic research between the research councils and the higher education funding councils.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson):** The Government's White Paper of May 1991 set out a new system for funding higher education, including a new balance of funding for academic research between the research councils and the higher education funding councils. My right hon. Friend will be working closely with his colleagues responsible for the higher education funding councils to ensure that this system is managed effectively to promote good research and to obtain the best possible value for the taxpayers' money.

**Mr. Maxton:** Will the Minister ensure that the Scottish universities receive a fair allocation of funding through their research council? In particular, when allocating funds to the Faraday institutes, will the hon. Gentleman ensure that Scotland gets one this time? In particular, will he look carefully at the excellent scheme put forward for a Faraday institute by Strathclyde university and the national engineering laboratory at East Kilbride?

**Mr. Jackson:** The allocation of research funds to Scottish universities is a matter for the Scottish higher education funding council. That, in turn, is a matter for the Departments of Education in terms of the overall allocation of funds for universities. However, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point to their attention.

I noted what the hon. Gentleman said about the Faraday institute. This initiative is still in its early days; firm decisions have not been taken. It will be possible to take his point on board.

## Charters

35. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further areas of Government activity are under consideration to be covered by a charter; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reviewed the coverage of the citizens charter at his seminar last Friday. We have achieved a great deal, but there is much to do. We intend to publish a courts charter later in the year, and a charter for the users of further and higher education—students and employers—early in 1993.

**Mr. Greenway:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as a result of charters, by the start of the next academic year parents will have access to comparative tables of performance information, which will greatly assist them in choosing schools for their children?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend is entirely right. Under the parents charter, parents will receive annual written reports on their child's progress at school, information on arrangements for discussing that and national curriculum and examination results with teachers and comparative information on the examination results and truancy rates of schools in their area. We are encouraging schools voluntarily to publish information on staying-on rates and school-leaver destinations, which will be required from September 1993.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** Will the Chancellor express his concern about the regression in achieving the citizens charter targets for those on health waiting lists and for those who have been waiting more than two years? What role will he take in ensuring that the regression that has occurred since the election is put right?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** As the hon. Member doubtless knows, the huge gain in the past year—40,000-plus—dwarves the small set-back last month, which I guess will

be corrected in the months ahead and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will then congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on that.

**Mr. Adley:** May I probe my right hon. Friend's terms of reference for the citizens charter? Am I right in thinking that, initially, he is examining the public service provided through public funding of organisations that have a public obligation? That being so, does he agree that he has an obligation to examine actions taken by public bodies such as, shall we say, British Rail, whose reorganisation has taken place over many years? Will he therefore consider BR's reorganisation to see whether he believes that it is in accord with the service that he intends the public to be able to enjoy from British Rail?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend is right, although I would extend the point further: whether the service is provided by private or public money, my office has a role. I am interested in the organisation of British Rail if that helps or hinders it in meeting the objectives that it has agreed.

## Citizens Charter

36. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on progress towards the implementation of the citizens charter.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Since the White Paper on the citizens charter was published last July, we have made excellent progress. Nineteen charters have been published, setting out detailed service standards across much of the public sector. We have enacted legislation to bring the powers of regulators up to the levels of the strongest, to give parents more and better information about schools and to give more and better information about the services that councils are providing and at what cost. We have also launched the charter mark scheme. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy referred to the successful seminar that we held at No. 10 Downing street on Friday.

**Mr. Barnes:** Are the citizens charters supposed to offer openness and scrutiny, in an era in which more and more is being hidden from hon. Members and in which areas of agency agreements can no longer be questioned? In those circumstances, should we not try to achieve consistency and set up a Select Committee to investigate the work of the Duchy, especially on citizens charters, so that the two bits begin to fit with each other—scrutiny under the citizens charter and scrutiny in the House?

**Mr. Jackson:** The hon. Member is absolutely right that the citizens charter is all about openness and clarity. Setting clear targets and monitoring performance against them is one of the critical instruments of the citizens charter. The hon. Gentleman's point about the accountability of agencies to the House is slightly misconceived, because the answers given by chief executives are available to hon. Members. There is continuing discussion about how this should be done most effectively. That is not wholly a matter for the Government, because it is also partly a matter for the House authorities, as is the hon. Gentleman's last point about Select Committees.

**Mr. Dickens:** Is not it a fact that the citizens charter is designed to defend the ordinary person against the state or the local authority, or against any of the large organisations that provide services? Is not it a tribute to the citizens charter that the Prime Minister has thought it necessary to set up a special Department to administer the citizens charter to give the ordinary citizen his rights?

**Mr. Jackson:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The citizens charter is making considerable progress in improving specific commitments to individual people who use services. In British Rail, there is the commitment that 90 per cent. of trains should arrive within 10 minutes of schedule and that 99 per cent. of services should run. For patients, there is the commitment to individual appointment times and maximum waiting times for operations. There is the commitment to a waiting time of 10 minutes in the Employment Service. There is a commitment to a passport waiting time reduction from 24 days to seven days. There is a commitment to timed appointments in the utilities. All those are specific improvements in service which derive from citizens charter initiatives.

# Points of Order

3.30 pm

**Mr. Michael Meacher** (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request from the Secretary of State for Social Security, or from any other Minister, about making a statement on the report by the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation on the Maxwell pension funds? The House needs to see the report because, if it reveals spectacular failure in the process of the regulation of the Maxwell pension fund, not only does that suggest that the Financial Services Act 1986 is deeply flawed——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have received no request today by any Minister to make a statement on that issue or on any other issue.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You know that I am not one for causing trouble—not recently, anyway. I should be grateful if you would point out gently to the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) that, until such time as there is a change in the constitution of the United Kingdom, it is open to Scottish Members to raise any question at any time.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct; and I am sure that he will remember the point in Scottish Question Time.

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I will not ask whether you have received a request from a Minister to make a statement, Madam Speaker. In view of what you have just said, clearly you have not.

The Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill is now in Committee. Before it meets again tomorrow, will you consider whether it is possible for you to suspend the sittings of the Committee until a Minister has made a statement in the House about the rumours, about the Government's plans to abort the implementation of community care which was planned for next April? Week by week, rumours are coming out of the specialist press and other media that the Government will abort the plans. We know that in July 1990 they aborted the plans for implementation in 1991——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying to make a speech rather than putting a point of order to me. Any suspension of the Committee is up to the Chairman of the Committee. The matter should not be raised on the Floor of the House.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A few minutes ago, you made a ruling about saying things about the royal family. It seems strange to me that hon. Members can grovel in the House to the royal family, they can praise them up to the hilt, and they can say anything they like about them in the hope that they will get a knighthood or get into the honours list, yet if hon. Members want to speak the truth about the royal family, they are pulled up. Why cannot I demand that the Queen pays taxes? Why?

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is perfectly in order in making that demand. I repeat that no criticism of a personal nature can be made about any individual other than by way of a substantive motion. That is the statement I made.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You said that you have received no request that a Minister wants to make a statement today. I would much appreciate some guidance. Can you tell us how it would be possible, at the earliest opportunity, to raise the question of police killings and the suspension of talks in South Africa? Slaughter is taking place there. The British Foreign Secretary has said on many occasions that sanctions are no longer necessary. How can we raise the important issue of what is happening in South Africa, the continuing bloodshed and the suspension of talks which will hopefully lead to majority rule? Foreign Office questions will not be——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have some indication of when Foreign Office questions are to be taken. If the hon. Gentleman uses a little ingenuity, he will make use of the time when the Prime Minister comes to the Dispatch Box tomorrow and later in the week to answer questions.

**Mr. Peter Hain** (Neath): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I note your earlier ruling, but surely, after the appalling massacres of black citizens by the South African police, the Government should immediately introduce diplomatic sanctions, including the suspension of South Africa from the Olympic games——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Points of order should be for me to deal with and should concern Standing Orders and our procedures. There has been no breach of our Standing Orders or procedures. I cannot respond on matters of policy.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sure that I misunderstood your ruling in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). You said that one should not criticise any individual other than on a motion. I assume that you meant any individual member of the royal family, not any individual. If I wanted to call Rupert Murdoch a pillock, it might not be pleasant, but it could not possibly be out of order.

**Madam Speaker:** The question that we were discussing concerned the royal family and the reference was to an individual member of the royal family.

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would you consider the way in which Welsh questions are conducted? A serious problem seems to arise from the fact that, of the 38 Welsh Members of Parliament, only four are from the Conservative party. Out of the 12 Welsh questions that you took today, there were only two opportunities for you to call Labour Members to ask a supplementary question. Will you consider the matter to ascertain whether there can be a fairer representation of Members' views in supplementary questions?

**Madam Speaker:** I carefully consider questions and how to conduct them before I come into the Chair. I realised on 27 April that I would not make all hon. Members happy all the time.

**Mr. Skinner** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has raised his point of order.

**Mr. Skinner:** The question arises out of——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Another hon. Member has a point of order to raise.

**Mr. Skinner:** I want to know——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) has a point of order.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and your answer to it, Madam Speaker. You gave a different ruling today from your ruling to me and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). You said that we could criticise individuals as long as they were not members of the royal family. You have reinterpreted the rule. Where does that ruling come from? Is it merely a convention? If so, surely we can challenge it as being out of date. I remind you that you are supposed to represent Back Benchers' interests, and we should have the right to say what we wish.

**Madam Speaker:** On a substantive motion, we can say what we like. The hon. Gentleman should refer to "Erskine May", but I cannot remember the page. If he comes to see me, I shall turn it up for him.

**Mr. Skinner:** On a point of order arising from what you said about the royal family, Madam Speaker. This is a fair question. How big is the royal family? How many people are we not allowed to criticise—there is no list in "Erskine May"? Is Fergie still in it? Will Diana be in it in another three months?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Like some Ministers, I need notice of that question.

**Mr. Alan Williams** (Swansea, West): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), Madam Speaker. My hon. Friend understands well, as we all do, the difficulties for the Chair when there is an imbalance between the parties in the number of Welsh Members. We are worried that, with such an imbalance, most of the Welsh questions on the Order Paper are inevitably tabled by Labour Members. Therefore, if the Opposition choose not to ask a supplementary question and only the Member who has asked the main question asks a supplementary, by practice other Welsh Members are precluded from having an opportunity to ask supplementaries on questions tabled by Conservative Members.

**Madam Speaker:** In that case, the hon. Gentleman need not be worried because I move as rapidly as possible down the Order Paper in order to reach as many substantive questions as I can.

## Statutory Instruments, &c

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c),*

INTERNATIONAL IMMUNITIES AND PRIVILEGES

That the draft Vienna Document 1992 (Privileges and (Immunities) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft Caledonian MacBrayne Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Forth Ports plc (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## Boundary Commissions Bill

*Considered in Committee*

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

3.40 pm

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris):** Before I call the first clause, I have an announcement to make. There is an addition to the selection of amendments. I have added amendment No. 15 to the end of the provisional selection of amendments.

### Clause 1

REMUNERATION OF MEMBERS OF BOUNDARY COMMISSIONS

*Question proposed,* That the clause stand part of the Bill.

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): I should like to raise one point on clause 1. I know that the Committee will want to debate the first amendment on registration in some detail so I shall make this a short point. Perhaps the Home Secretary could tell us how many extra commissioners he expects to be appointed under the Bill's provisions. Who will they be and when does he expect them to be appointed and in a position to start their work?

The Secretary of State will be aware that on Second Reading it was suggested that commissioners did not sit as often as they might. Given the scope of, for example, clause 3, a great deal of work will have to be carried out between now and the end of 1994. It would be helpful if the Secretary of State could tell us briefly when those people are expected to be in post.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke):** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's query is that I do not at present anticipate the appointment of any extra commissioners to deliver the Bill. We believe that the statutory timetable laid down in the Bill can be delivered by the existing commissioners if they are enabled to spend a little more time and have some extra logistical support. That would require about half a million pounds more in public finance each year.

The likelihood is that some of the commissioners will meet rather more frequently than has been their practice in the past, but at this stage I do not anticipate that it will be necessary to appoint any extra commissioners. If there were a change in the membership of any of the boundary commissions, or if new commissioners were appointed, I expect that there would be discussions to ensure that any commissioners appointed were acceptable to all the relevant political parties that were interested.

**Mr. John Maxton** (Glasgow, Cathcart): I gather that the Secretary of State does not appoint the Boundary Commission for Scotland. Will he co-operate with the Secretary of State for Scotland to ensure that the salaries, pay or fees are equal in Scotland and that there is equality between England and Scotland in that regard? I should not like to see our Scottish lawyers lose out in that matter.

**Mr. Clarke:** The hon. Gentleman is correct that, as Home Secretary, I am responsible only for appointing the Boundary Commissions for Wales and for England. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the Boundary Commission for Scotland. I believe that I was correct to say a moment ago that he does not expect to appoint any additional commissioners as a result of the Bill. We have not yet settled the final details of the salaries of commissioners, but I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's point in mind. I do not expect that there will be any great regional or national disparity in payments.

3.45 pm

**Mr. Darling:** The Secretary of State said that he expected there to be some discussion between parties if any additional commissioners were appointed. Will he confirm that that will be so, as I understand that that has happened until now? Will he also confirm that he speaks on behalf of the Government, given that he does not appoint the Scottish commissioners?

**Mr. Clarke:** Neither the method of appointment of commissioners nor the practice will be changed. They have hitherto been found satisfactory, whichever party has been in power. I say that on behalf of the whole Government, not simply in respect of the boundary commissions for which I am responsible.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) mentioned barristers' fees. I am talking about commissioners. The assistant commissioners tend to be barristers and they are usually appointed inquiry by inquiry. The number appointed varies according to the workload at any given time. The commissioners, who hitherto have been unpaid, will in future be paid as a result of the Bill. I expect—although without commitment, because we have not discussed the point in detail yet—that the payment will be the same for all four boundary commissions.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

### Clause 2

TIME LIMITS FOR SUBMISSION OF REPORTS

**Mr. Darling:** I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 5, at end insert

'provided that if the Commission is satisfied that the electorate in any area is to a significant degree different from the population in that area who are qualified to vote then they may delay submitting their report until they are satisfied as to the accuracy of the register.'.

The amendment would allow the boundary commission to delay submitting its report if it was satisfied that the registers on which its calculations were based were inaccurate.

The whole system of the boundary commission's work is based on the electoral registers. If they are wrong in a particular area, that clearly throws the boundary commission's calculations. There is considerable concern about the state of the electoral registers in this country, for both parliamentary and local government elections. Section 8(b)(1) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 provides that the boundary commissions must have regard to the electorate, which is defined as

"the number of persons whose names appear on the register of parliamentary electors in force on the enumeration date under the Representation of the People Acts for the constituency."

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the accuracy of the present electoral register. We know that it is inaccurate—that has always been the case—and it has been a particular problem in inner city areas, for obvious reasons. The turnover of people tends to be great and people arriving do not fill in the appropriate forms. Indeed, much evidence suggests that many people in different parts of the country simply do not receive the forms. Nor do they have in mind the necessity to get on to the electoral register. Many people assume that they are already on it and do not check to see whether that is so. In the last general election, many of us had the experience of people who thought that they were on the register because they had lived in the area for many years but then found that they were not and were denied the right to vote.

One of the many effects of the poll tax has been to make the electoral register even more inaccurate. It made breaking the law an acceptable act for many people who would never have contemplated such an act in the past. That is one of the legacies with which we must live for many years to come. Some people believe that the census carried out in 1991 will be inaccurate because people were in a state of mind that did not discourage them either from misrepresenting the position to the enumerator or simply not bothering to fill in the form. Indeed, many people have simply disappeared from the poll tax register or the electoral register and will not feature in the census.

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): Will my hon. Friend take into consideration the situation that has developed in my constituency? In the late 1980s and 1990, new properties and housing estates were built and there was a general movement of the population, and a substantial number of people did not have the opportunity to register on the electoral roll. That shows that the register to which the boundary commission refers is totally inadequate and out of date. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) bear in mind that parts of the population will be transferred from one district to another due to the new building works?

**Mr. Darling:** My hon. Friend raises an important point, which concerns me. If new building does not feature on the electoral register, one wonders at the state of registration of residents in old buildings. One would think that the electoral registration officer would notice substantial new building works and would be put on his or her guard to ensure that residents were placed on the electoral register.

However, that is not the first time that I have heard of substantial new building work being carried out and residents in occupation before 10 October of the relevant year finding that they were not on the electoral register. That is an example of how we know that the electoral register is inaccurate, yet we still expect the boundary commission to base its entire calculations on that register. That is one reason why the boundary commission should be given the power to delay submitting its report when it is satisfied that the electoral register for a specific district is inaccurate.

The anomaly arises in some districts where people who are on the poll tax register, having paid their poll tax, do not appear on the electoral register, even though they have done everything that the Government said they should. They then have no opportunity to vote in the general election in April. In many cases, the poll tax register is potentially more accurate than the electoral register due to the powers to registration officers.

In Lothian region, part of which is covered by my constituency, I do not understand why the registration officer, who is responsible for the poll tax and electoral registration, cannot simply compare the two registers and, if they differ, ask why. It seems odd that someone can be on one register but not on the other.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) received written answers that tend to confirm the suggestion that electoral registers are inaccurate. Columns *473* to *480* of 11 February 1992 of *Hansard* show that, when comparing those on the electoral register and the estimated number of those who should be on it, there is a discrepancy in England and Wales of 1·7 million. Those people do not appear on the electoral register, but should do so.

When we consider the figures in greater detail, we see that in Birmingham—which we are told may lose one seat as a result of the review process—31,000 people we might expect to be on the register are not. That factor should worry us as it makes a substantial difference for quota purposes when the commission decides whether Birmingham should lose one seat. Newcastle has a deficiency of 10,000. When I looked at the two London boroughs of Richmond and Kingston upon Thames, I found that the figures were 23,000 and 20,000. Under the rules, the boundary commission cannot generally cross London boroughs, so it could be argued that, in that case, the discrepancies would not make any difference. The Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), is present. He must ponder why, according to that parliamentary answer, 23,000 people who should have been able to vote for him or the other candidates in the general election were not able to do so. That seems to demonstrate that the electoral register for his constituency is seriously inaccurate; and the same applies to many other parts of the country.

We know that in 1976 the Government thought that the register was 97 per cent. accurate. Yet the Minister of State, on Second Reading, said that it was only 95 per cent. accurate in 1991. I take the figures with a pinch of salt; I do not know how anyone can ever be absolutely sure, given the nature of the statistics.

The electoral registration officer in my area told me that she was satisfied that the register was 95 per cent. accurate. My observations tend to suggest that that is not true. Ministers accept that the register is becoming more inaccurate, and that should worry us all. It may bring short-term benefit to the Government; but in the long term we should all be concerned that people who should be on the register cannot exercise their right to vote.

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It would be illuminating to hear the Secretary of State's view on the accuracy of these percentages. When I query them in Birmingham, I am told that they are based on dwellings. The problem is that one can never know how many people live behind those front doors and may be eligible.

**Mr. Darling:** That is what the poll tax was meant to find out, but we know that it never did reveal how many people lived in a dwelling.

Some of the figures for London make the same point. The Tower Hamlets electorate rose by 6,000 between 1991 and 1992, but the numbers fell in nearby Hackney by 20,000. The number rose by 5,000 in Croydon, but Hillingdon lost 9,000. That is curious. I do not believe that the population is moving around London in those numbers. The figures suggest either that the electoral registration officers are unable to compile an accurate register or that a growing number of people are removing themselves from the register because they perceive that to be in their short-term interest.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): The figures throw up more and more anomalies. For instance, I noticed that the estimated population in my borough in 1990—I refer to people of 18 years of age or over—was 153,600; yet in 1987 158,000 people voted. In 1992, 157,000 voted. Obviously, we believe in voting early and often in Newham, but what is happening in my borough is the very reverse of what my hon. Friend is describing for other London boroughs.

**Mr. Darling:** I hope that the Secretary of State will deal with that point.

We have the figures for Scotland for each constituency, although we do not have them for England and Wales. It is clear that there is a discrepancy between the number of people whom we believe to live in a constituency and the numbers on the register. There are 141,000 missing persons in all, a great many considering the size of the Scottish electorate.

We now know that the 1976 register was not an entirely satisfactory one on which to base boundaries that did not come into force until 1983. We know that the 1991 register was not accurate even in 1991, so it would be even less accurate in 1992, or, for that matter, in 1995, when, if the Bill is passed, it is likely that the new boundaries will come into force.

The purpose of the amendment is to allow the boundary commission to delay submitting a report when it believes that its information is inaccurate. By definition, that will allow those who want to make submissions to the commission to submit evidence suggesting that there is under-registration. If the boundary commission is satisfied that there is under-registration, the electoral register notwithstanding, it is desirable that it should be able to base its findings or recommendations on its belief of the population in an existing or potential constituency.

I understand that it is open to the commission to take into account known planning consents when considering the likely population of a constituency. It should be able to take into consideration under-registration—if that is established. If it does not, it is difficult to see how it can obtemper rule 5 in the 1986 Act—the rule stating that the boundary commission has to try to ensure consistency while allowing it to depart from the quota by 25 per cent. so as to avoid excessive disparities. The question that arises is, disparity from what if the electoral registers are inaccurate? If the object is to produce an accurate register, at least at the start of the life of a constituency—of course, there will be changes later—the Government must recognise that there is no point in proceeding with the Bill if we know that the current registers are inaccurate, in some cases extremely so. When we start operating on the new constituencies, we will know that, in many respects, they have been drawn up on false information.

4 pm

We know that the number of those eligible to vote in Scotland, England and Wales has increased but that the number on the register has decreased between 1990 and 1991, particularly among first-time voters, and, as I said earlier, that should be of concern to us all. A growing number of young people now believe that there is nothing wrong in failing to temper an injunction to perform their civil duties or in failing to observe the law when it comes to registration and complying with requests to return forms to show that they live at a particular address. The Government may think that there is some advantage to be gained because young people, on the whole, tend not to vote for the Conservative party. However, it cannot be right that a growing number of people believe that they can opt out of civic life.

I remember canvassing a family in my constituency about a year ago which I knew for a fact consisted of the parents and three young adults—their children. When I spoke to the father, he said that just he and his wife lived there. I asked about the three boys and he replied, "They do not live here, if you know what I mean." The boys did live there, but by not appearing on the register the family saved £400 a head in poll tax for three people, which totalled £1,200—a sum that that family could ill afford to pay. The children were not on the register for either electoral purposes or for the poll tax. That is bad for the country.

What should be done? In addition to accepting the amendment, I hope that the Home Secretary will accept some other suggestions. The practice of electoral officers when compiling the registers varies in different parts of the country. In addition, some of them check the accuracy of the registers more than others.

Perhaps, the Government could also pay regard to the small amount that they spend on advertising. For example, in Scotland the boundary commission will start work on a register that will be drawn up in October, but £48,000 only will be spent on advertising. That would preclude any television advertising. In England and Wales, the sum is equally proportionately low. We do not see television advertisements encouraging registration. The House will remember that when many industries were privatised the Government were happy to spend millions of pounds on advertising public assets for sale at knock-down prices. We remember the advertisements on the sale of the gas industry and being told to "Tell Sid". I do not remember that Sid was ever invited to enrol on the electoral register. The Government should pay the same attention and attach the same importance to getting people to register as they apparently did to the sale of public assets to individuals. The Government need to step up their advertising campaign to ensure that people are placed on the register.

We also need to examine the procedures used when canvasses are carried out. We could learn from some of the methods used in the poll tax legislation, which ensured that people were sent notices reminding them again and again that they should be on the register. When the Home Secretary introduced the Bill, he issued a press release on 5 June which drew attention to the disparities in electorates and he said that "that cannot be fair". It is not

particularly fair, but it is even more unfair if comparisons are made from registers that we know to be inaccurate. If that is unfair, will the Home Secretary tell us how he intends to remove such unfairness? What do the Government propose to do about the problem? What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think that the boundary commission should do about the problem? If he will not accept our amendment, will he say how he expects the commission to pay heed to the fact that, in many cases, the registers on which it bases its calculations are highly inaccurate? We know that the population changes, but it is becoming increasingly obvious that we do not know by how much and to what extent in each constituency.

I know that a number of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the Committee want to contribute in what I think will be a fairly short debate, so at this stage I shall conclude by urging the Committee to agree to our amendment, which would be an acceptable way of ensuring that, when the boundaries are drawn up, we can be sure that they contain the number of electors that the boundary commission said that they did and on which it based its calculations.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): Some of the points made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) are worth discussing, but the Committee should consider whether they can profitably be used as an excuse for delaying the progress of the Bill. As I understand it, his argument about people who are not on the register might affect 1,000 or 2,000 people in a constituency. In my constituency, where a fair amount of canvassing was carried on during the general election campaign, we did not find all that many people who were not on the register when they should have been. My guess is that some of the changes in the past few years have occurred because people who are entitled to dual registration have decided to maintain registration in one place rather than another. Those things may vary from one constituency to another.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): The problem is that there is bad distribution of those who are not on the register. If 1,000 to 2,000 people in each constituency had not registered, that would have no consequence on the redrawing of boundaries because each constituency would be affected in the same way. However, because lack of registration is so badly distributed, it has a serious affect on the distribution of parliamentary seats.

**Mr. Bottomley:** That is right, but the purpose of the amendment is to delay the boundary commission report, and I would argue against that. In my constituency of Eltham, there is a proposal to increase the size of a student village from 300 to 2,000 bedrooms, which would have a profound impact on the number of voters. Whether they would all vote Labour or all vote Conservative or, as is more likely, split down the middle is a matter for them. However, that is not a reason for delaying the boundary commission report. It is clear that we want that report to be submitted, considered by the House and brought into effect.

The point that I want to make goes beyond the amendment, so I shall make it only briefly. If parliamentary constituencies are kept within borough boundaries—that applies most of all in London and other large conurbations—problems arise. The quota for a constituency is supposed to be 65,000, but one borough may contain not enough people to entitle it to have three constituencies while the next-door borough, with 1,000 more residents, has enough for three constituencies. The result would be a difference in the size of constituencies in the two boroughs of 27,000 people per constituency. That swamps the considerations being used by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central as arguments for delay. I hope that the House rejects the amendment because it will delay matters, but there are serious points outside the Bill.

**The Chairman:** Order. Clause 3 covers local government boundaries. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not develop this point too far now, because if he does so he will be out of order.

**Mr. Bottomley:** I was on my ultimate sentence.

The arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central are worth discussing outside the Bill, because every hon. Member should be keen to ensure that everyone who should be on the electoral register is on it. However, I reject his contention that this is a ground for delay. The Bill is needed because the discrepancies between sizes of constituencies swamp the effect of his argument.

**Mr. Maxton:** We have recently been through a general election and, by canvassing in our constituencies, we have an idea of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the register. There are different degrees of accuracy because of, for example, the type of housing or the social mix that is to be found in individual constituencies.

One evening I was canvassing in my constituency with my wife. We were in a high-rise block of flats, working along each corridor. I rang the doorbell of one flat and heard a man's voice ask me from inside what I wanted. I told him that I was the Labour candidate and that I was looking for his vote. In two words, and without opening the door, he told me exactly what to do. I thanked him politely for his interest and moved on to the next door. The door was then flung open and the man charged out of the flat. I did not see it initially but he had a table lamp in his hand. My wife, who was canvassing along the corridor, was convinced that he intended to use it to smash in my head.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): It is called enlightenment.

**Mr. Maxton:** It so happened that the man was only about 5 ft 1 in. He decided that discretion was the better part of valour and walked past me. As he did so, he told me—again, in clear and positive language—exactly what I could do with the Labour party, with voting for me and all the rest of it. I then said, "Thank you very much, Sir, but you are not on the register so you cannot vote anyway."

The man whom I encountered was clearly living in the flat but he was not on the register. The register showed that a single woman lived there. It gave me some pleasure to be able to tell him that he could not vote, but the experience demonstrated the inaccuracy of the register. My canvassers returned on many occasions with the same sort of story. They found that two or three people were living in a flat, yet only one person was registered.

Registration is not as accurate as it should be, and we must ask ourselves why that is so. One factor in my constituency is redevelopment. Large parts of a housing scheme are being redeveloped—they are being pulled down. The register showed that 200 or 300 people were living in a series of flats, but when we went to them we found that most of the flats were boarded up and hardly

*[Mr. Maxton]*

a soul was living in the development. That is a short-term matter and does not have much to do with the registration officer, who cannot do a great deal about it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said, poll tax comes into the issue. It does so for two reasons. First, as my hon. Friend said, some people deliberately avoided going on the register on becoming 18 so that they would not have to pay the poll tax. Others removed themselves from the electoral register to avoid paying the poll tax. Removal is more difficult to achieve, but it is possible to do so by moving house, especially by moving within certain areas.

Secondly, registration for the poll tax has made registration for electoral purposes much more difficult for those who are involved in the process. In the past, when canvassers employed by the registration officer were sent to check the electoral register and to get names on it, there was no great hassle. People were not worried about giving the necessary information to canvassers. With the introduction and implementation of the poll tax, however, many people linked poll tax registration with electoral registration. Many of those who were employed to keep the electoral register up to date found the job extremely difficult. They encountered a great deal of hostility. They were met with abuse on doorsteps. They were told exactly what to do with the registration process.

It has become more difficult for registration officers to find part-time staff to undertake the job. They may be able to find a sufficient number, but whether those whom they employ now are as good as those who were used in the past is questionable.

Canvassing is a well-paid job—I do not know the going rate exactly, but I understand that it is possible to earn quite a lot of money in an hour. We all know how many houses we can canvass in an hour and I think that a canvasser is paid about £1 for each house on which he or she calls. We know that we can call on 20, 25 or 30 houses an hour. On that basis, it is a reasonably well-paid job. Increasingly, however, dangers are attached to it. Some members of the public are extremely hostile and the work becomes increasingly difficult.

I am assured by registration officers in Scotland that their procedure is as foolproof as they can make it. They claim, rightly or wrongly, that they make use of poll tax registers and school leaving information provided by education departments. They also check the housing records of district councils wherever possible. They say that every house receives a visit from a canvasser. I rather doubt that. I am not questioning the quality of the canvassers, but I must question whether every house is visited. If no one is at home on the first call, the canvasser calls a second time. If no one is at home then, a form is put through the door for the person to fill in and send back. That appears to be a good procedure that should work, ensuring that there is a full register in each constituency.

4.15 pm

Canvassers may meet hostility on the first visit. Quite often they are middle-aged, middle-class women. I do not want to be unkind about parts of inner-city areas, but if such a lady went to a close in Glasgow—a block of flats in Glasgow terms—she might find a group of youths with cans of beer in their hands sitting at the bottom of the stairs. Indeed, they might be taking other substances. There might also be a couple of Alsatian dogs that did not appear to be under anybody's control. That lady might be unlikely to do anything more than the most cursory canvass of that block, and we all understand why.

Such difficulties inevitably lead to inaccuracies in the figures for the number of visits made. They also lead to an imbalance between middle-class and working-class areas. I hate to use the term "working-class areas" because that implies that those living there are in employment, whereas in fact very many of them are unemployed—often long-term unemployed—and have many problems.

That canvasser's second visit would probably be similar to the first—and even putting a form through the door would not receive much response. In my area of Hamilton, if someone is not on the register he would return his form, but that is not necessarily the case in other areas. That creates the sort of inaccuracies that concern us.

Whenever we raised the question of inaccuracies and questioned why people did not register, the Home Secretary said that it was an offence not to register. He is right; it is certainly an offence not to be on the electoral register if one is eligible to be so. Indeed, as part of the procedures for poll tax registration, the Government raised the fine level for non-registration from the minimum to the maximum. I shall be happy to give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman if he will tell me how many prosecutions there have been in England and Wales or Scotland for non-registration for electoral purposes. Quite simply, he cannot give me one example because there have not been any. There is no point in saying that it is an offence not to register—and that thereby the register is improved—if registration officers and the Government are not prepared to use their powers to enforce that. Some registration officers in Scotland tried to bring prosecutions, but procurators fiscal declined to pursue them because of insufficient evidence.

**Mr. Rooker:** I used to think that it was an offence not to register, but in the early hours of one July morning a couple of years ago, a Home Office Minister told me, in this Chamber, that was not so. The offence only arises if an individual is asked by a registration officer to register and refuses to do so. If a registration officer does not know of an individual's existence, he or she is not obliged to register. One is not required voluntarily to register and one does not commit an offence by failing to register voluntarily.

**Mr. Maxton:** My hon. Friend is right. The offence arises only if, having been asked to register, one refuses. If, however, the procedure which I described is followed, in theory at least one has been asked to register. If one fails to return the form, theoretically one could be liable to prosecution. The problem remains that those who want to bring the prosecution must provide proof that the form was delivered. If a form has not been returned, and if the authorities cannot gain access to a house to determine that a form is on the premises and has been torn up and thrown in the bin, it is impossible to obtain such proof.

The Government ought to do more to ensure accurate registration—particularly at a time when boundaries are being drawn on the basis of an electoral register that many of us believe is not as accurate as it should be.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): When was the last time that my hon. Friend heard any Minister express

concern at the Dispatch Box at the absence from the electoral register of the names of individuals who should be on it?

**Mr. Maxton:** I cannot recall that ever happening, but perhaps we will hear such an expression of regret from the right hon. and learned Gentleman today.

People have a democratic right to vote, and they ought to be able to do so. Often, inaccuracies arise by accident. An 18-year-old can grow up to be a 22-year-old without his or her name ever appearing on the electoral register—never having been asked to register. The accuracy of the register is important when boundary commissioners are taking decisions about the number of seats that should exist in particular areas.

Glasgow may lose more seats than it ought if the register is as inaccurate as I and others believe. The Government should make every effort to ensure that cities such as Glasgow and Birmingham have accurate registers. If there is a genuine fall in population, fair enough; but seats should not be lost because of inaccurate registers.

**Mr. Barnes:** According to Glasgow's estimated population for 1990-91, the average electoral register in that city is 2,500 short. That adds up to a serious overall shortfall.

**Mr. Maxton:** My hon. Friend is right, and that means that across Glasgow about 30,000 people are not on registers who ought to be on them. That could be the difference between Glasgow having not 11 seats but nine or 10. Those 30,000 people could make all the difference.

Registration officers spend a lot of money on canvassers, but the Government are not prepared to spend money on television advertising in particular—as they have in respect of a range of other issues—to ensure the accuracy of electoral registers.

There is a question mark over one or two other points as well. The electoral register must be drawn up in the latter part of the year before that in which the May local elections take place and published in February. The timing may be fair enough as far as canvassing is concerned, but it is less fair on the elector. The draft registers are published at the end of November, after which the elector has only two weeks of some of the year's worst weather in which to check that his name has been included. After that, the register is finalised. I feel that the time of year is wrong and also that a fortnight is not long enough.

The Government were happy to provide—indeed, they insisted on legislating—for every poll tax payer to receive in the post, as the poll tax register was drawn up, a notice informing him that he had been included on the register and telling him where he could appeal against or alter the registration if he wished to do so. Why cannot the same procedure apply to electoral registration? Why cannot the registration officer, once the draft register has been prepared, send each household—or each individual within a household—notice that the person or persons concerned will appear on the register? The poll tax register included a form to be filled in if there were any new names to be added. Why should not the same be done in this instance? That might not ensure a universal return, but at least people would know whether they were on the register and what to do if they were not.

The Home Secretary may ask, "What about the cost?" The Government were happy to bear the cost in relation to poll tax registration; in any event, would the cost be so enormous? It would be a matter of sending a single letter. There would, of course, be printing and other costs, but in an area such as Strathclyde region the cost would probably be no more than £500,000 if the letter were sent to each individual, and half that if it were sent to each household. Is £250,000 too high a price to pay for ensuring that democratic rights are protected? That is what we are talking about—people's democratic right to take part in the processes of both local and central government and to have their entitlement sustained by a proper electoral registration system.

I am delighted to support the amendment, and I hope that the Home Secretary will consider my points.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): This debate highlights the narrowness of the issues covered in the Bill. The mischief of an inaccurate and incomplete register does not sit easily with the other mischief that the Bill seeks to address—the distortions that occur when there is too much delay between the boundary commission's reports.

The amendment is valuable, in that it draws attention to what I believe concerns more electors than perhaps any other single matter. What was said during the general election campaign made that very clear to me. Nothing gave rise to greater anger in my constituency than the complete exclusion from the electoral register of a fairly recently constructed housing estate. Strong representations were made about it. I doubt, however, whether such an issue could usefully be taken into consideration by a boundary commission. It is a local administration issue.

4.30 pm

None the less, the Home Secretary has done democracy a great disservice by confining so tightly the long title of the Bill as to make it necessary to link the matter now under consideration with the duties of the boundary commission. It is not appropriate to take such a narrowly partisan view of the reform of our electoral law that it forces the debate into these unnatural channels, which inevitably it has to do if the issue of the inaccuracy of the register is to be raised at all. It would have been more sensible for the Home Secretary to have allowed the debate about the unsatisfactory nature of our electoral law to roam a good deal more freely than appears to be his intention. He may choose to take the opportunity afforded by this debate to answer the questions that have been raised about the unsatisfactory state of the register and not simply to explain to us that it would be inappropriate for the boundary commission to hold up its reports, as proposed in the amendment. He may also choose to explain what he proposes to do to correct the mischief.

It must be said, even if only en passant, that the message from Christopher Chataway's commission for the Hansard Society—that an electoral commission, with more wide-ranging powers than the boundary commission but to include the powers of the boundary commission—would be a better way to deal both with the question of the timeliness of reports and with the question that is linked with this amendment: the inadequacy of the registration process.

If the boundary commission were to enjoy the power proposed by the amendment, it is doubtful whether the mischief that it seeks ostensibly to address would be tackled effectively. The speeches that have already been made clearly suggest, both by their examples and by their

general proposition, that those who are not on the register are not, in many cases, on the register because they do not wish to be on it. We could not sustain for very long the proposition that, because of an extraneous law—the poll tax—a substantial number of people do not wish to be on the electoral register, boundary reviews should be held up.

With the flux of time and the change in local government finance arrangements, that may prove to be a transient problem. I certainly hope so. I doubt whether we should embrace the amendment and the purposes towards which it is ostensibly directed, though I am grateful to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) for drawing attention to an area of electoral law and electoral administration where speedy intervention by the Government is needed.

**Mr. Winnick:** I suggested on Second Reading that it would be preferable to have an overview debate on electoral matters before debating a Bill of this nature. I said, rather briefly, that a number of factors should be debated, especially after a general election, before considering this hastily moved Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has done valuable work in spotlighting, almost from the beginning of the poll tax controversy, the number of people who were likely to be left off the register, and in fact have been. Tribute should be paid to him, because in doing so he has done a service not only to his party but to democracy.

One of the worrying features is the number of electors who are missing from the register. I do not believe that the Government are genuinely concerned about the problem —I know that this may be dismissed as a cynical view and the Home Secretary is muttering, but I believe that I am accurate—because, in the main, they work on the assumption that if such people were on the register and bothered to vote they would be more likely to vote Labour than Tory. That may be entirely wrong, but that is the assumption in the minds of Ministers.

From the outset, not only my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East but other Labour Members pointed out that one of the results of the poll tax, which destroyed Mrs. Thatcher, would be that many people would believe that they could avoid paying a tax that they regarded as unjust, penal and could not afford by staying off the electoral register. No matter how often one emphasised the fact that two registers were kept, the end result was what we feared.

If the Government oppose the amendment—there is little doubt that they will—the boundary commissioners will have no authority to take this important point into consideration. My hon. Friends have already spoken of the many people who are not on the register. Therefore, in carrying out their tasks, the boundary commissioners will make a faulty assessment from faulty figures. That is why I, unlike the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), believe that the amendment is important.

How can accurate decisions be made about boundary changes if data are far from accurate? As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said, in a number of constituencies, certainly in inner-city areas, not a few but many people are missing from the register. Inevitably, there have always been some people who should have been on the register but were not, but the situation today is significantly different and far more alarming, unless one takes the view that it does not matter —that if people do not want to be on, so be it. That is not my view or that of Labour Members.

Press reports two or three days after polling day—I know that the Home Secretary will consider this to be another cynical view, but I believe it is accurate—showed that the Government are concerned about getting as much advantage out of boundary changes as possible. Why do we constantly read in the press that the Government are working on the basis that by the time of the next election there will be 10 or 20 seats to their advantage? On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that the Government's optimism may be misplaced. I hope that it is, but that is not their thinking and we would not be debating the Bill now if they were not of that view.

I emphasise, as I did on Second Reading, that I do not believe that boundary changes should not be made. That would be a nonsensical point of view. I am not of course suggesting that once boundaries have come into being, they should never be reviewed. Of course they should be reviewed on a regular basis; that is right and proper. However, the haste of the Bill and the trailing of it just two or three days after the election on 9 April makes one suspicious about the Government's aims.

I believe that one of the Government's objectives is the reduction of inner-city constituencies and the creation of newer constituencies elsewhere, which would be to their advantage. One of the most important points in all this is the need for impartiality. In the existing system or in any other electoral system, such as the one favoured by the Liberal Democrats and by some others, there must be a review of boundaries. However, impartiality is also required. If that impartiality is broken down, mainly by the way in which the Government act, there will inevitably be much concern and suspicion, and a rather cynical view of what the Government are concerned about. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said last week, the Government did not consult the Opposition on the Bill, which was previously normal practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) spoke about the difficulties of getting people on to the register. Why could the Government spend so much money on trying to ensure that people overseas who, in many cases, left the country many years ago and who had no remaining links with Britain were on the electoral register?

**Mr. Maxton:** I wonder how much it cost.

**Mr. Winnick:** My hon. Friend asks how much it cost. One should compare that effort with the lack of concern, attention, advertising and expenditure directed to getting people who actually live in Britain on to the electoral register. People may say that I am being cynical, that I am wrong to accuse the Government of ulterior motives because they are wholly innocent and that this is, yet again, just a cynical Labour view. Inevitably, the question arises why the Government have been so concerned about overseas voters. Is it because they have said to themselves, "How terrible it is that these people who, in many cases, have broken all links with this country, have been away a long time and have no intention of returning are not on the register. It is vital for British democracy that they record their votes in a United Kingdom election"? That could be the Government's view.

Alternatively, the Government may have worked on the assumption in the previous Parliament that the majority of such people, if they bothered to vote—I do not know how successful the Government were—would vote Tory rather than Labour. If one adopts a more impartial view, the Government should try their utmost to ensure that people living in Britain who are not on the register are brought on to the register.

I hope that the Home Secretary will refrain for a moment from talking to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. I am sure that he is interested in what his colleague is saying and that it is of the greatest national importance.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten):** We are discussing the hon. Gentleman's speech.

**Mr. Winnick:** I am glad that the Secretary of State for Education, who has just walked in, is showing such interest in these matters. It is always interesting to see. Perhaps other members of the Cabinet will soon walk in and instead of gossiping—*[Interruption.]* I am willing to give way to the right hon. Gentleman if he wishes. He continues to make his remarks from a sedentary position. I hope that the Home Secretary can advise me. If the amendment is opposed—*[Interruption.]* The mutterings of the Secretary of State for Education may be heard by his right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but I cannot hear them. If he speaks a little louder, I might.

**The Chairman:** Order. Hon. Members speaking in Committee should address their remarks to me.

4.45 pm

**Mr. Winnick:** The Secretary of State for Education may wish to address his remarks to you, Mr. Morris. I am sure that that would be of some interest. I am not sure how we shall be able to continue the debate without the presence of the Secretary of State for Education, but we will try our utmost.

I want to ask the Home Secretary an important question. If constituencies are considered to be too few in number, if the boundary commissioners come to the view that certain constituencies, because of numbers, are to be abolished and if the figures on which the boundary commissioners have worked have not been accurate, especially in inner-city areas where significant numbers of people have been missing, what purpose will be served by making recommendations that are based on faulty data? If the amendment does not meet the Home Secretary's approval, I hope that he will table a Government amendment before the Bill makes further progress to meet the point that I and my hon. Friends are trying to make.

It was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East on Second Reading—he will correct me if I am wrong—that one way to overcome some of the difficulties of getting people on to the electoral register would be to have an electoral number.

**Mr. Barnes:** It was not me.

**Mr. Winnick:** I stand corrected. The idea was suggested by one of my hon. Friends. I should have thought that, just as one has a national health service number and other numbers, one could have a permanent number once one was eligible to vote. As long as it was clearly understood that people vote once, it would be a possibility. There would not then be the problems, which my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart mentioned, of people being afraid of intimidation or of people staying off the register because of the poll tax. I may be putting forward a suggestion that is not of my making, but I am willing to pick up suggestions of value. The suggestion of an electoral number should not be dismissed out of hand.

If we are really concerned about the democratic and electoral process and if we want to encourage people to vote, we should be worried by the fact that at least 25 per cent. of the electorate never vote in general elections. I am sure that the Home Secretary agrees that, in local elections, it is sometimes difficult to persuade to vote more than one third of those eligible to vote. That is alarming.

It is sometimes said that whatever happens in the United States is repeated in this country in due course. I hope that that does not always happen in view of the crime figures. In the 1988 presidential election there fewer than 50 per cent. of the people voted. We do not know what will happen in November this year. It would be alarming if that figure or any figure near it were repeated in the United Kingdom.

Obviously we want people to vote for our own party, but above all we want people to vote and we want people to engage in the electoral process. In some constituencies and, unfortunately, in some inner-city areas, the number who vote in a general election is less than 60 per cent. or 62 per cent. That too is alarming. There is an under-class who take the least interest in public affairs and who feel very alienated from the electoral process. I cannot go into all the reasons for that because you would soon call me to order if I did, Mr. Morris. The step of being on the register in the first place would be a start in encouraging such people to vote.

I urgently suggest that the Home Secretary should accept the amendment or that he should table a Government amendment so that when the boundary commissioners decide on their recommendations the House will at least have confidence that those recommendations are based on accurate figures.

**Mr. Barnes:** I welcome the fact that the amendment distinguishes between those people qualified to register and vote and those people on the electoral register. There is considerable disparity between the number of people on the register and the number entitled to be there, as many hon. Members have argued.

I hope that the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) will accept that, in supporting the amendment, I am not supporting a device to delay implementation of the legislation. I have argued for four years in the House that the poll tax would cause serious problems for electoral registration, and the evidence has proved that to be the case.

I was not the first Member of Parliament to raise the problem of the poll tax. As far as I can judge from reading *Hansard*, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned it in the Committee that dealt with the poll tax legislation.

**Mr. Maxton:** I do not wish to question my hon. Friend's historical accuracy, but the Scottish poll tax Bill was pre-1987 and I can assure him that I and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) mentioned the problem, as did other members of that Committee.

**Mr. Barnes:** I am sure that that is the case. I am referring only to legislation affecting England and Wales which was passed during my time in the House.

I am not even asking for an accurate register; I am asking that the register of people entitled to vote within each area should be as accurate as possible. It would be difficult to get accurate registers before redistribution as so much needs to be done to correct them: we must ensure that people who are on the register but are no longer entitled to be are removed and that other people who are entitled to vote are added. There is no reason why we should not be able to work out as accurately as possible how many people should be on the register.

Many hon. Members have quoted the latest 1991 statistics. The results are divided into constituencies in Scotland and into district areas in England and Wales. The Minister must tell us why we cannot act on those figures, rather than figures for electoral registration, given the serious problems affecting them.

I would welcome some statement on Home Office moves to ensure that electoral registration is improved, so that when this legislation affects future boundary reviews an accurate register will be used.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said that Ministers had never mentioned the problems affecting electoral registration, but there have been several limited comments on the subject. I shall quote the Minister of State, Home Office—the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd)—when he summed up the debate on Second Reading, saying:

"Rather more insistently, many Labour Members . . . complained that the 1991 register, which is the reference point for the English, Scottish and Welsh boundary commissions, is insufficiently accurate to form an acceptable base for redistribution. I have some sympathy with that view. Just as I believe that constituency boundaries should not be allowed to become too out of date, so I believe that registers should be as up to date and as complete as possible."—[*Official Report* 15 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 742.]

**Mr. Winnick:** I heard the Minister say that, but it is the least that he could have said. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that the Minister acknowledges the problem, and we shall hear what the Home Secretary has to say about it later, but I am not aware that Ministers ever drew attention to it on their own initiative. The Minister was merely saying the least that could be said in the circumstances, in reply to Opposition Members.

**Mr. Barnes:** Even the expression of sympathy with "that view" is important. The logic of having sympathy with it should be that we shall receive some sign of what will be done to correct the manifest abuses in electoral registration. The Minister's statement was welcome, but we must prod the Secretary of State to tell us what the Home Office will do to put registers right.

Reference has been made to parliamentary answers given by the Scottish Office and the Department of Health to a question about the state of the electoral register. In a sense, every hon. Member represents a sort of rotten borough, because hosts of electors are missing from the register. In areas where Members have healthy majorities, which are far larger than the number of electors missing, it is not a serious matter. However, other Members have narrow majorities—especially Conservatives. The Government hold 22 seats with a majority of 1,000 or less, and in each of those seats well over 1,000 people are missing from the electoral register. If they are missing because of the poll tax and are an anti-Tory cohort, those hon. Members might depend on the poll tax to win their seats.

The written answer providing information on registration in Scotland was given on 6 February 1992 in columns *293* to *296* of *Hansard*. It shows that there are 140,000 fewer people on the electoral registers than the estimated population taken at mid-1990 figures. The electoral registration figures are for 1991 and voters had to register by October 1990. Those June and October 1990 figures are the latest available. Neither the Scottish Office nor the Home Office will produce later figures because they are waiting to process the census figures and to relate them to electoral figures.

Unfortunately, everyone is aware that there were problems with the census, which was also affected by the poll tax. Legislation was used to try to inform people that there was no means by which census information could be used for poll tax purposes—whether that was generally believed is another matter.

The figures for Scotland, produced in the parliamentary answer, are for district council areas and for the 72 parliamentary seats there. In each constituency there is a shortfall in the number of electors compared with the estimated population able to vote. In 14 seats, the discrepancy is more than 2,700 and it rises to almost 5,000 in Strathkelvin and Bearsden. The discrepancies are maldistributed and 76,000—more than half—of the missing electors are in the Strathclyde region, although it does not contain half the electors in Scotland. As I said in an earlier intervention, the position in Glasgow is worrying. In each of the 11 seats, between 2,300 and 2,700 people are missing.

Unfortunately, the details are not so complete for England and Wales. The figures given on 11 February 1992 in *Hansard* are for only metropolitan districts and district council areas and are bundled together in shire counties. However, they show that in England 1,750,000 people were missing overall. Within each metropolitan district and shire county there is a shortfall, but it is a maldistributed shortfall.

5 pm

In London there are 10 boroughs in which more than 20,000 people were missing off the registers at the time for which the figures were given, even though efforts were made in certain parts of London to improve registration for the general election. However, we do not have comparative population figures for the time of the general election which we can use. The figures for 1991 will be used for the purposes of the Bill. The quota will be worked out on the basis of figures for 21 February 1991.

We have a problem in working out the quota of seats on the basis of which the various county areas will be divided. In later investigations it might be possible to talk about more recent electoral figures and make improvements so that the details can be adjusted. But the overall quota will be determined on the basis of the 1991 figures.

The problem is of some importance in Derbyshire where the quota that has been worked out is 10·19 seats. So only a slight adjustment, depending on what happens in the rest of the country, could bring the quota up to 11. However, once the review process has started, it will be too late because the quota will already have been determined, whatever people may argue about the shortfall in their area. The shortfall will help only to determine some detail

about where the boundaries should be, rather than determining the number of seats that Derbyshire should have.

In Greater London, 482,000 people are missing from the electoral register. Areas such as Barnet, Camden, Ealing and Westminster all have more than 30,000 people missing. There is a serious maldistribution of the shortfall in England and Wales. In some areas of Wales such as Gwent, there seems to be no serious problem; only about 21,000 people are missing overall. But other areas, such as Greater Manchester, have 104,000 people missing and there is a serious problem.

We need to ensure that we act on the most accurate figures possible, both to determine the quota and to decide how areas should be divided. That problem must be handled with some urgency because there is some urgency about redistributing the seats. We cannot continue to have unequal electoral districts. Indeed, the Labour movement is greatly attached to equal electoral districts. Equal electoral districts were one of the six points of the charter which our forebears in the Chartist movement proposed —often with much opposition from Tory Members of Parliament.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. Will he put his comments in the context of paragraph 4(1)(ii) of the schedule to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, which deals with the London boundaries? I believe that I am right in saying that a borough with only one Member of Parliament could have an electorate of between 36,000 and 104,000, a borough with two Members of Parliament could have an electorate of between 53,000 and 87,000 and a borough with three Members of Parliament could have an electorate of between 59,000 and 81,000. That elasticity seems rather greater than the discrepancies to which the hon. Gentleman properly refers.

**Mr. Barnes:** Of course, there are other issues to be raised than the one which I am addressing. The notion that in some cases it should be possible to cut across London borough boundaries to achieve equal electoral districts is important. Undoubtedly, other hon. Members will make that case. But I am dealing with an overall problem in England, Scotland and Wales. I have not raised the different quota sizes for Scotland, Wales and England. Arguments could be made about that. It could be argued that smaller nations should have extra consideration. But even the quota sizes for Scotland and Wales under the current rules are affected by the general difficulty with electoral registration.

**Mr. Maclennan:** Would it be practical and possible to tackle the problems, to which the hon. Gentleman properly draws attention, within a time scale that allows a new electoral register to be drawn up before the anticipated date of the next general election, even if the Government's objections to the manner that the amendment proposes are too strong to allow the Committee to accept the amendment?

**Mr. Barnes:** It is possible to move ahead quickly on electoral registration reform. Indeed, I have a private Member's Bill which will come before the House on 12 February to tackle the matter. I have had consulations with the Home Office about it. Even if the Home Office wanted to change some of the details, if it agreed with some of the principles behind the Bill, the Bill could be a convenient vehicle for reform. But 12 February is still a long way away.

Discussions are being held between the political parties, other organisations and the Home Office about what happened at the last general election, including what happened with electoral registration. Investigations have been undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys which may allow more modern comparisons to be made. There is no reason why the Government could not take that information into account quickly and introduce the appropriate legislation instead of the measure before us now. The Bill could also be placed on hold until the electoral registration provisions have been corrected.

If the Government do not offer appropriate legislation and I have to go ahead with my private Member's Bill on 12 February to press the matter, it may still be possible to make adjustments to the Bill which we are considering which would improve the position. One possible adjustment is amendment No. 1. Alternatively, the Home Office could state that it would take into account the estimated population figures or that it would examine the figures closely to discover how accurate they are. It could make use of those more accurate figures and provide estimated population figures for not only Scottish but English and Welsh constituencies so that we could act on them.

There is no problem with electoral registration figures in Northern Ireland, where the estimated population figures are adhered to. One reason why there is not a problem in Northern Ireland is that the poll tax was never introduced there and did not mess up the register. Northern Ireland still has the problem of countervailing sets of errors in the register which exaggerate the numbers in some places and exclude people elsewhere. That problem has existed for a considerable time. It was referred to in an OPCS report in 1981.

Let us point out the problem created by the poll tax on the basis of the empirical evidence. On page 2 of *Population Trends* of summer 1991, the OPCS published a table showing that in 1987 the number of people on the electoral register was 99·2 per cent. of the estimated population. The figures for the years until 1981, plus 1976, were about the same. They sometimes slipped to as low as 98·4 or rose as high as 99·3 per cent., but were usually about 99 per cent. After 1987, the percentage began to drop year by year and, by 1991, it was 96·5—a fall of 2·7 per cent. since 1987.

Furthermore, the "attainers" group—those registering for the first time—cannot be found on previous registers. Those wishing to duck electoral registration to avoid payment of the poll tax were likely to be younger people. The figure for that category shows a fall of 4·7 per cent. The same does not apply to Northern Ireland, where the figure for that category has been increasing. In England and Scotland, the number registering was never so high compared with the estimated population. The explanation may be that there were more overseas visitors, a factor that must be taken into acount.

In 1987, the figure was 97·4 per cent., which is similar to the figure for previous years. After 1987, the figure starts to fall until it reaches 95·5 per cent.—the figure mentioned by the Home Secretary on Second Reading. That is a fall of 1·9 per cent. The figure for attainers shows a fall of more than 6 per cent., which shows that a serious problem must be tackled. It is not simply a slight statistical aberration

*[Mr. Barnes]*

but fits in with a host of information from electoral returning officers on how figures should be collected and how those should relate to poll tax registration in different areas. It also relates to the fact that Bills under discussion in the House had begun to interlink the poll tax and the electoral register. For example, a small Bill on Caldy island had only two clauses: one about poll tax registration and the other about electoral registration. That interconnection has always existed.

The electoral register's problems are not caused entirely by the poll tax. The poll tax has revealed serious difficulties and is itself a problem that needs to be tackled. But other problems are caused by growing numbers of homeless people, who feel that they do not belong to the system, and people who move around in search of employment. The latter are encouraged to get on their bikes to look for employment and, when they do so, they frequently change accommodation and are never firmly placed on a register. All those factors have added to the long backlog of what was already wrong with electoral registration. Those problems have often been hidden from view by other countervailing problems.

Let us show that we are trying to get the register right and, in the process, press forward to achieve equal electoral districts. Ideally, the right order would be to get the registers right first and then deal with the areas. However, if the Government are not willing to move in that way, they must say what they will do to overcome the current serious problem. They must obtain a decent set of rough and ready figures to show what electoral registration should be, so that the boundaries can fit in with those.

I hope that, even if we push the matter to a vote and the Government pull out their forces and make us lose, the Minister will promise to act on electoral registration and rectify the mess that existed at the last general election. There was little wonder that the pollsters got it wrong, because pollsters never take account of whether they are investigating the right people. Before the general election, pollsters were investigating those who could be on the electoral register rather than those who were actually on it, which is what gave the different result revealed in the ballot box.

5.15 pm

**Mr. Rooker:** The House of Commons does not deal with this important subject often enough. From my experience of the past two or three years, I believe that Home Office Ministers do not take electoral registration or administration matters anywhere near seriously enough to be proactive about them.

Evidence shows that, by and large, the British do not like registering. It is probably anathema to them in the same way as are identity cards. Press reports in the past couple of weeks show that people in Cornwall do not even like registering the dead, as a result of which Tory Members have been hiring taxis and scurrying around delivering proxy votes for the dead for Tory candidates. That is another twist to the problem of lack of registration. Similar problems occurred at the Plymouth by-election earlier this year. It seems that problems relating to registration in the west country need to be solved.

I wish to develop some points that I made in the early hours of the morning on 23 July 1990. I do not wish to repeat my speech, but I hope that the Home Secretary will at least say what the Government are doing about the areas where they know defects in electoral registration exist. I remind him that, two years ago, in the July Consolidated Fund debate, I gave examples of those known defects. That was just after the poll tax came into force and just before registration, in September 1990, for the key register of February 1991.

Senior officials and members of local government do not take electoral registration as seriously as they should. Electoral registration officers are starved of resources, and the "go-getters" in local government are not interested in the matter. As a result, it becomes a backwater. Without electoral registration officers, who are the bedrock of democracy—our democracy and its operation depend on their work—the whole system would be a farce. They do not receive sufficient political backing.

From Ministers and senior officers in local government downwards, there is an enormous amount of ignorance about the registration process and that should be dealt with. I accept that it is an administrative exercise, but it is also a political exercise. There were fewer electoral registration officers in the quill pen age than there were two years ago. I had the privilege of addressing the last two annual conferences of the electoral registration officers and I know that they are pleased that hon. Members on both sides of the House—I once attended the conference with a Conservative Member—take an interest in the mechanics, minutiae and technical aspects of registration.

Ultimately, however, if a person's name is not on the list, he or she cannot vote. If the name is not on the register, his or her town, ward or constituency may be deprived of proper and fair representation. It matters not whether someone votes; if he or she does not appear on the list of voters, when redistribution takes place a seat may be taken away from the town or borough.

Home Office research has identified another deficiency. It is a crying shame that the Home Office funds research on the effectiveness or otherwise of registration but never presents the House with proposals to solve the problems. It has issued the odd piece of guidance, but that is not good enough.

Anyone representing a district in which there are houses in multiple occupation will know that shared letterboxes prove disastrous for electoral registration; both research and practical experience show that. Occupants of dwellings that have been converted into flats and bedsits are more likely to be left off the register than those of other dwellings. Lodgers stand a good chance of being left off the register.

Several hon. Friends have referred to attainers, people over 16. Without wishing to be disrespectful, may I say that they are ignorant of the fact that even if they are only 16 years eight months this October they should be entered on the register because they will be 18 before February 1994. The average family, with a mother, father and a child who is not yet 18, or even 17, probably will not realise that the youngster's name should be on the list.

Well-substantiated research has shown that tenants of privately rented accommodation are more likely to be missed off the electoral register than owner-occupiers and local authority tenants. There is plenty of research to show that unemployed members of households are more likely to be missed off the register than people in work.

We all fight against public apathy. I found that 50 paid-up members of my constituency Labour party were not even on the electoral register two years ago—a not uncommon phenomenon in inner-city constituencies.

I mentioned that young voters of 18 constituted a category that presented problems, but independent studies funded by the Home Office have shown that up to 30 per cent. of 17 to 19-year-olds are missed off the register. A high proportion of people of 20 to 29 years of age are also easily missed off the register. Those problem sectors mean that the names of about 7 per cent.—at any one time, 2 million people—are missing from the register. That is an enormous number, and we must take action.

I shall repeat two important issues which I have raised before as no action has been taken on them: we must have political and administration action. I visited Scotland to listen to the assessor—the director of finance—for the Lothian region in the early months of 1988, when the poll tax for England was being debated in the House. I took it upon myself to listen to what the experts in Scotland were saying as legislation was introduced there first. The dual functions of electoral registration officer and assessor are embodied in the same person. It was explained to me that it was the norm in Scotland for the assessor, in his role as electoral registration officer, to contact secondary schools automatically. He did not merely issue a grubby notice to be stuck on the school board to warn 16-year-olds to register but targeted the pupils and obtained dates of birth.

I see nothing wrong with electoral registration officers being proactive and obtaining dates of birth from schools and local education authorities so that when it is crucial for the names of those young people to appear on the register—as young as 16 years eight months—they receive a personal letter from the electoral registration officer inviting them to register. It should not be left to the young people to register voluntarily.

Such a system has since been tried in my city, where I explained what was happening in Scotland and said that if it was good enough for Edinburgh it was good enough for Birmingham. The electoral registration officer in Birmingham met with some success and was welcomed by some of the head teachers, but some did not even bother to respond to his inquiry. That matter will be pursued. The electoral registration officers must be proactive and more work must be done. I am talking not about any breach of privacy but about obtaining dates of birth so that people can be warned in time to register.

We must obtain more information about multiple-occupation dwellings. That information is also needed for other reasons such as public health, housing policy and fire prevention. Details of bed-and-breakfast accommodation can be found from housing benefit records and can be easily obtained by electoral registration officers. That information should be used.

Hostels and refuges are used mainly, although not entirely, by women and children who have suffered domestic violence. I hope that the Home Secretary is aware of the problem. Under the poll tax legislation, anonymous registration is possible. Most, but not all, victims of domestic violence are female. It is possible for them to be registered anonymously. They pay their poll tax, but their names are not public knowledge so that they cannot be tracked down by a violent spouse, boyfriend or partner. There is no such procedure in the electoral registration legislation.

I have talked to electoral registration officers who say that they know where the refuges are. Such places do not have boards outside, but the officers know the addresses of the establishments. There should be a way to ensure that those people gaining shelter from violence, whether in local authority or voluntary sector homes—which have led the field in recent years—are not deprived of their right to vote simply because of the fear of having their name on the electoral register. Obviously, they cannot use the location from which they have sought refuge as the local polling station would be known by the violent partner. I know that there would be dangers in anonymous registration, but EROs say that it would be possible to introduce a registration procedure to ensure that people sheltering from violence do not lose their right to vote. There is no such provision under present electoral law.

People who genuinely have no fixed abode—a fairground worker or a tramp who uses the same ditch on the night of October each year—can register from that locality. The Greenham women were registered from the common. If such people can register, those in refuges should be able to do so. People do not have to live in bricks and mortar to register; they merely have to be in the same place at the same time of year, whether that be a fairground or a ditch. It is important that peripatetic citizens have the right to vote. We should have a mechanism to deal with cardboard city and those sheltering from violence.

I have said nothing tonight that I did not say two years ago, but the Home Office appeared to take no action following that July 1990 debate—the fact that it took place early in the morning is no excuse.

There was an action plan. The Minister of State, who wound up the Second Reading debate last week, said a word or two about it. Nevertheless, these are the real reasons why the accuracy of the register is at risk. The poll tax was certainly an added burden. Some people voluntarily absented themselves for all the wrong reasons. My party never encouraged them not to register, but they took themselves off.

5.30 pm

The redistribution that has become necessary since 1976 shows that the number of people registered to vote has increased by a net 2·4 million, but the fact that they all live in the English shires worries me. Those shires will gain 20 seats at the expense of the cities. I know that, for reasons of housing and social policy, the density of population in our cities was always likely to decrease, but it is remarkable that the increase in the shires should be so large—it will result in a considerable redistribution of seats in the House of Commons.

The recent census was itself affected by the poll tax, but it tells us enough to know that the electoral register is inaccurate to a degree that should concern the commissioners. They ought to be able to take account of those factors.

Redistribution has to take place and the sooner we all know how seats are to be redistributed, the better. In general terms we know that the register is inaccurate and in detailed terms we know why—yet the Home Office has initiated no programme of action. The former Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), now vice-chairman of the Conservative party, has been hovering around the Chamber today. Last year in September, I tried to

persuade her to place some advertising in respect of absent voters. I said that that could make the Home Office popular—as opposed to drugs, prisons and inner cities. The issue was about democracy and giving people the right to vote, and it could make Home Office Ministers voter-friendly. I saw that I had struck gold with her——

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Which is why they moved her.

**Mr. Rooker:** The right hon. Lady was standing for a marginal seat, so I knew that I was striking home.

Although the Minister's face began to glow, the faces of her civil servants fell. I offered her a programme of action; I offered to share a platform with her; I even offered her a quote in a joint press release, showing that this was not a partisan issue. The mechanism whereby we are elected must, after all, be absolutely clean, open and above board. We are the only people who can ensure that it is.

The civil servants talked of the money that this would cost. It is, after all, only a few thousand pounds—chicken feed. We could lose the required money just adding up the third column of decimal places in the public expenditure accounts. It is nothing compared with the vast sums for which the House of Commons votes.

It is difficult, therefore, to believe that money is the problem. The problem is the inertia of the Home Office. I hope that this Home Secretary will overcome it. He has all the evidence from the research done by the Home Office, and he has heard or read our speeches today and on Second Reading. I hope to goodness that he will do something. If he does, he will serve democracy, which is ultimately what the Bill is all about.

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has spoken of how registration officers in local government are being starved of the resources that would help them go about the important business of keeping the electoral register up to date and ensuring that the names of those entitled to vote are on it.

I concur with my hon. Friend's view that there is a need for more resources to help these officers carry out their work. We all know that all local authorities, because of capping and other restrictions, have problems employing enough people in their registration offices to carry out the necessary exercise to maintain a full register.

I hope that the Home Secretary will take note of our anxieties about the limitations placed on people in local government who are trying to carry out this work. The amendment gives the commission additional powers to enable it, if it is not satisfied because the electorate in a given area seems significantly different from its population, to delay submitting its report until it is satisfied with the accuracy of the register. That is an entirely constructive move. Nothing in the amendment is offensive to the work of the boundary commission. Indeed, it strengthens the democracy embodied in the commission's work. We all want to ensure that everyone entitled to register to vote at elections should be included on the register.

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): A county may contain 16 or 18 seats and may include urban areas scattered throughout its length in which there is a material fall in the number of those registered. But just as urban areas can be affected by the failure to take account of the true numbers who should be on the register, because of the manner of redistribution, the whole county and all the seats in an area will be affected too. Does my hon. Friend agree?

**Mr. O'Brien:** I intend to inform the House of a situation identical to that described by my hon. Friend. I refer to the county of West Yorkshire, which contains a large number of cities—Bradford, Leeds, Kirklees and Wakefield. There are also rural areas in the county. The population is not centred on any one area; it is spread across the county. The approach of the boundary commission is to take the number of registered in February 1991 and divide it so as to leave just over 90,000 electors per constituency.

The five metropolitan districts in west Yorkshire have 12 seats, but the boundary commission suggests that, theoretically, it should be entitled to 11.41 constituencies. That suggestion is made on the basis of the figures in the electoral register of February 1991.

According to the figures, the 23 constituencies in west Yorkshire are made up of an average of 68,540 electors in each constituency. The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) suggested that 1,000 electors could be missing from each constituency register. That is a conservative estimate, but if we accept it and add that number to the average of 68,540 for each constituency in west Yorkshire, the figures would be in line with the recommendations of the boundary commission. The amendment substantiates the point made by the hon. Member for Eltham and by Labour Members.

I reiterate that we must be fair and that we must be seen to be so. The boundary commission must also be fair when it submits its report and its proposals, particularly those for west Yorkshire. I do not see how any justification can be made for reducing the number of seats in west Yorkshire when we take into account other events of the past five years, such as the introduction of the poll tax. In that time, the number of people adding their name to the electoral register has reduced significantly. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said that, five years ago, 99 per cent. of those eligible registered to vote. However, on Second Reading, the Home Secretary accepted that that figure had decreased to 95 per cent. When that decrease in registered voters is taken into account, I see no reason why the 23 seats in west Yorkshire should not be retained. The Home Secretary must take into account the extenuating circumstances of the past five years.

We must ensure that those who are entitled to vote add their names to the electoral register. It has been suggested that it is important that the report is published speedily —no one wants a delay before the boundary commission's proposals are published. It is important to speed up the process, but if that report is produced earlier than expected, the Home Secretary and Conservative Members should take account of the amendment, as it would help to solve the problems that we have outlined tonight.

5.45 pm

The review that we are discussing is based on the electoral register of February 1991. Some counties will be divided by the electoral quota. We have been advised that there will always be discrepancies in the number of electors in various constituencies. For example, the Isle of Wight would equate to 1·4 constituencies according to the figures provided by the boundary commission. However, if

another constituency were to be created, it would mean that one Member of Parliament represented constituents on the Isle of Wight and on the mainland. For that reason the boundary commission said that an additional constituency would not be permissible.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) referred to rural areas where the population is widely scattered. That leads to discrepancies in the number of people on the electoral register for each constituency. If we accept that discrepancies exist, west Yorkshire, which is made up of cities, conurbations and large rural areas, would be justified in retaining its existing number of seats.

Earlier, I pointed out that, on average, 68,540 voters make up each constituency in west Yorkshire. If we accept those figures and the geographical location of the communities, the boundary commission would be justified in spending some time on its review of the distribution of seats in west Yorkshire. If the boundary commission feels that it needs more time to consider the issues, it should be given it, so that its report is accurate and in the best interests of the people of west Yorkshire. The amendment would provide such accuracy.

If the Home Secretary is unable to accept the amendment, I hope that he and other Conservative Members will take account of our arguments. Reference has been made in the debate and on Second Reading to constituencies crossing boundaries. Some constituencies cross the boundaries of London boroughs. My constituency, which crosses the boundary between Leeds and Wakefield, is made up of a part of Leeds and a large part of Wakefield. That is necessary to give Leeds and Wakefield their full allocation of seats. In 1987, Leeds had 8·25 constituencies and Wakefield had 3·75 constituencies —12 seats between the two district authorities. On the basis of the February 1991 register, it has been suggested that Leeds is entitled to 7·5 constituencies and Wakefield to 3·5—a total of 11. In that way the boundary commission would reduce the number of seats in west Yorkshire from 23 to 22.

I hope that I have explained in detail the concerns that I and others in west Yorkshire have about the need for the boundary commission to review the situation before taking a decision to reduce the number of representatives to the House of Commons from west Yorkshire.

**Mr. Bermingham:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, in 1979-80, when the boundaries in Yorkshire were dealt with —I declare an interest because I had something to do with them—Leeds was entitled to 7·25 seats and Wakefield to 3·75, with the result that, taking the two metropolitan districts together, there were 11 seats, one across boundaries? The position now is that Leeds should have 7·5 seats, and Wakefield 3·5, so if one adds the two together one still gets the same total—11—and the redistribution should logically take place on that basis.

**Mr. O'Brien:** That is exactly what the concern is. The suggested electorate of 90,500 results in a reduction of one in the number of constituencies. Because of the extenuating circumstances such as the rural areas in the county and the fact that there are at least 1,000 people missing off every electoral register—I think that that is an underestimate, and that the figure is nearer 2,500—we have every justification for supporting the amendment.

The Home Secretary should allow the commission the opportunity to present a factual report. In its press release, the commission said that it considered that time is limited in the present circumstances and that it would have difficulties in presenting its report by 1995. When I intervened in the Home Secretary's speech on Second Reading, and pointed out that the boundary commission had said that it would be pressed for time if it had to present the report in 1995 and he is now asking it to report 12 months earlier, the House was told that the commission would be given additional resources to help it to make up the shortfall and to ensure that it could report in 1994. We have heard tonight that only limited resources will be made available.

We should consider carefully what we have heard from the Home Secretary and what is happening on the ground. We need to ensure that the boundary commission, which will be limited in its resources, can report its findings. I hope that pleas that I have made on behalf of west Yorkshire will persuade the Home Secretary to accept this constructive amendment, which will give the boundary commission additional powers and solve many problems in west Yorkshire.

**Mr. Ian McCartney** (Makerfield): Like a number of my colleagues, I voted against Second Reading last week, and the debate tonight proves how right we were to do so. We are debating the narrow nature of the Bill. Even if there is accommodation on both sides of the Committee about the progress of the Bill, and even if there is agreement about how we proceed with electoral registration, it will be impossible to make an accurate assessment that will assist local authorities and communities, in this current round of constituency redistribution, to gain access to the commission in a way that will ensure that the final decisions correctly represent the number of people who should be on the register.

The amendment is about who is eligible as compared with who is on the register. In Greater Manchester, there are about 104,000 potential members of the electoral register who, for various reasons—local circumstances or wider circumstances—are not reflected in the numbers on the register. Yet a document already produced by the boundary commission implies a decrease of two constituencies in the Greater Manchester area, from 30 to 28.

Therefore, even if, during the progress of the Bill, my hon. Friends or, more importantly, people in the community such as community representatives can find more information to show that a less than accurate view has been taken of the number of electors in the area, that will be insufficient to secure additional seats in the Greater Manchester area. The implied change has already taken place. The theoretical entitlement has already been fixed and two seats will have been taken from the Greater Manchester area.

At this stage, it is vital that the Bill is held up until the Government give the basic commitment that, in those areas where there is already a declared, or implied, intention to reduce the number of constituencies, there will be a registration census to ensure that the boundary commission does not fix, in advance of its inquiries, the entitlement for a county, whether it is in the London area or a shire area. If entitlement is fixed at the beginning of the boundary commission's proceedings, we can have all the debate that we like in this place about the improvement

*[Mr. Ian McCartney]*

in registration, but the reality will be a reduction in the number of parliamentary seats, despite the clear evidence that the population has not fallen significantly and that a substantial number of people who are entitled to register have not done so for various reasons. That is why the amendment is so important. It will make it clear that, if the boundary commission is to remove seats, it must do so not on the basis of the implied information but on practical information about population trends and those who are entitled to register.

I have a question for my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). I hope that now, or later, he will tell me whether the population area referred to in the amendment is that of a particular constituency or that of a particular county. That is vital because, if the amendment is just about the population in an area, that will not resolve the problem that I am raising because the boundary commission will already have fixed the absolute number of seats in any area. Therefore, even if the Government accept the amendment, it would not go far enough in protecting areas such as that which I represent, where there is a significant under-representation, for various reasons, of those entitled to be registered.

My hon. Friends the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) have spoken about the practical steps that need to be taken to improve electoral registration. That is not new. For a decade or more, hon. Members, both inside and outside the House, have argued for an improvement in both the practicalities of registration and the way in which electoral registration officers are required to carry out the registration procedure. Depending on the constituency or borough in which one lives, one may have an electoral registration officer who makes efforts to canvass for registration. In our area, that does not happen. People are therefore dependent on the importance that a borough places on their right to vote.

There are widespread discrepancies throughout Britain in the way in which the register is produced. That has to end. There must be a method of enforcing procedures throughout Britain that are consistent between boroughs. There must be a code of conduct also for registration, and the electoral registration officer or the local authority should not be able to put such a document aside. It should set out clearly and specifically the rights of individuals to be registered and the methods that the registration officer has to follow to ensure that the entitlement of registration is upheld. That must apply whether the individual is in a home of multi-occupation, in student lodgings, or in temporary accommodation which is the subject of housing transfer between a local authority and a housing association or of a transfer to an elderly persons' home. If there is a transfer from ownership of a home to another form of home, the right of electoral registration must not be lost. We must ensure continuity of the right to vote.

The same goes for employment. Why should someone who changes his employment status lose his ability to vote? To use a buzz term, why should not the citizens charter ensure that electoral registration takes place?

6 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central has not taken the opportunity to respond to the question which I posed, and I do not know whether he will do so. The issue to which it relates, however, is important to many of us on the Opposition Benches. Does the amendment, in terms of the review, relate the area of population to the area of a constituency or to the area within a county boundary to which a constituency is attached?

Is the Home Secretary prepared to provide additional resources, either through the boundary commission or to electoral registration officers in counties where there are large discrepancies between those who are registered and those who are residents, to overcome a problem that could lead to a reduced number of parliamentary seats? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to provide additional resources to enable a census to take place? When the boundary commission comes to consider major conurbations such as Greater Manchester or London, it should be in receipt of up-to-date information about potential electors and those who are actually registered. Without that information the Bill will do no more than enable the Government to put a date in their diary on which they can proceed to push through electoral redistribution for party political reasons. If that happens, no account will be taken of the practical and, more importantly, the political way that we redistribute parliamentary seats.

We must ensure that votes have equal value wherever they are cast, and that means up-to-date electoral registers. Areas such as Greater Manchester must not lose two constituencies merely because 104,000 potential electors have been left off the register. The loss of those electors threatens one-and-a-half constituencies. The people are living in the area but they are not registered. Why should we lose two seats in Greater Manchester 12 months from now, whether they be held by the Labour, Liberal or Conservative party? The people of Greater Manchester are entitled to 30 parliamentary seats and we must ensure that that entitlement remains.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): The House will not be surprised when I say that I support amendment No. 1. I shall be brief because the arguments have been well covered. When the Home Secretary replies to the debate it would be helpful if he were to respond to some of the anxieties that have been expressed. There would be no need for the amendment if we, the Opposition, felt that the Government were taking seriously the discrepancies in the political register—in other words, the many potential electors who are slipping through the democratic net. It is obvious that the Government are not.

The electoral register, voting methods and the number of people on the register should surely concentrate the minds of all hon. Members. Along with research and secretarial allowances, for example, the electoral register should surely be the second greatest issue for us. Au contraire, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), all those who have contributed to the debate have risen from the Opposition Benches. It could be said, perhaps, that not enough Labour Members have spoken. I cannot understand why consideration of the Bill in Committee, as on Second Reading, has not sufficiently engendered the interest of hon. Members. We are talking about those who put us in the House in the first place. Perhaps there is too much complacency in the House. Perhaps hon. Members are saying, "We are here to decide the issue. As we are here, ergo, the register must be working all right. Why spoil it?

If we bring a few more people on to it, perhaps we shall not be sitting in the Chamber, perhaps the additional electors will vote Tory, Labour, or for another party." I am worried that we are not showing sufficient concern. We, the Opposition, are showing more concern than Conservative Members but we are not showing the degree of concern that we should for something as crucial as the electoral register and the number of people who are on it.

**Mr. Rooker:** There is a warning for the future. It is far better and more honourable to show concern now than after one's constituency has been abolished. It is better to discuss the issues now than to moan about democracy after abolition. To complain afterwards will seem, as it will, to reflect a narrow, vested interest. My hon. Friend has made a telling point.

**Mr. Banks:** It seems that Newham will lose one seat. So be it; I am not here to argue necessarily that that seat should not be lost. I take my hon. Friend's point of principle. We are talking about the very stuff of democracy. We are not discussing whether X is a Member or Y is not. That is not the issue. Similarly, we are not really discussing whether this is a carve-up in the interests of the Conservative party. It seems to some of us, however, cynical though it might be, that the Tories are interested in rushing the Bill through, not to do something about representational levels in constituencies, but to grab for themselves an extra 20 seats, perhaps, in time for the next general election. Unless we hear something from the Government about the appalling state of the electoral register, especially in city areas, we shall be able to say only that our cynical interpretation of the Government's actions is correct.

**Mr. Barnes:** The stuff of democracy that interests most Members includes proportional representation and referendums. There is nothing wrong with that. If those are key issues, however, the correctness of the electoral register must have prominent significance. That must be so if, logically, it is tied to the other two considerations. Let us say that we had a referendum and the result was similar to the Danish one. If our register was 5 per cent. inaccurate, for example—in fact, the inaccuracy is greater than that—the impact on the result of the referendum would be enormously significant.

**Mr. Banks:** I acknowledge my hon. Friend's sterling work. He has set an example that the Government should follow. He has used his time in the House to draw attention to something that should be worrying us all. He has support on the Opposition Benches but at times he seems to be ploughing a lone furrow. The private Member's legislation that he seeks to introduce deserves some support from the Government. He is right to say that everything hangs on the register. For the sake of 1,000 voters in 11 constituencies, we would have a hung Parliament. I am not suggesting that we are concerned about the register because, but for the 1,000 voters in those constituencies the Labour party, would be in government and the Conservative party would be in opposition, or that somehow we would all be milling around in the middle of the Chamber. That is not the issue.

I return to the principal consideration. We should all be concerned about 2 million of our fellow citizens who appear to have dropped through the democratic net. We need to find out where they are. We must ascertain why they were not placed on the register and then do our damndest to get them on it. We should sit in the Chamber as Members of a Parliament that is genuinely reflective of the wishes and needs of the people. That brings me to proportional representation, but this is not the time to discuss the matter fully. It is always an attendant factor, however, when we have anything that affects the electoral register.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is right when he argues that we make allowances in the quota for rural areas because they are large geographic areas. Accordingly, we might not go for the quota of about 70,000. If we can make those allowances, why cannot we make similar allowances for deprived inner-city areas? The electorate in my constituency is nearly 47,000, but I put it to the House that my constituents bring me two or three times the weight of problems that come to a Tory Member who, perhaps, has 90,000 on his electoral register.

The Tory Member will say, "Never mind that. You may have more problems but we are electing a Government." Only if we think about proportional representation can we find some way eventually of balancing out the discrepancies between different cosntituencies. I accept that we should not debate that issue when considering the amendment before us, but I wish to emphasise and underline the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East.

**Ms. Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that if the amendment is accepted we would want the commission to examine the procedure that allows a large number of people who have not lived in this country for 20 years to appear on the register? Should not the commission investigate the way that their names were added to the register just before the last general election?

**Mr. Banks:** That is a good point. Indeed, after every general election there should be an examination of what happened during it. That should not be restricted to Labour Members wondering why they did not win; it should be an overall investigation. There should be a full discussion in the House so that we can all give evidence of our experiences as canvassers and campaigners in our constituencies. We have genuine information that we want to share in the interests of wider democracy—the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr with such effect.

We need to consider voting habits. The "Panorama" programme to be screened on television tonight apparently will show that a Tory councillor in St. Ives has been signing up poor old biddies—indeed, even the dead—for proxy votes. I know that voting is important, but I did not realise that it was more important than life and death—although it obviously was for that councillor. Such malpractices should be weeded out. If the "Panorama" programme proves to be as juicy as has been trailed, a number of matters will be weeded out—perhaps even the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). Who knows?

**Mr. Winnick:** That programme is actually to be shown on "Newsnight".

**Mr. Banks:** Quite so—and it is another excellent investigative programme.

We hope that the Government will make an announcement about additional resources. The Secretary

*[Mr. Banks]*

of State must accept that it is a crazy way to organise matters. Why is not each person given an electoral number that follows him around, rather like his national insurance or national health service numbers? We obviously think it important to have those fixed reference points, but it is no less important to have a fixed reference point for voting. Voting underpins everything that we do in this place.

We know that the way that electoral registration is operated, especially in inner-city areas, is bad. There is an inaccuracy in our registers of up to 17 per cent. The Secretary of State must know that registration is far more difficult in a mobile area. Communities in inner-city areas, such as London, are more transient than those in more stable communities elsewhere. In boroughs such as Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Haringey and Ealing, the electoral registration officers have to work much harder to get people on to the electoral registers than they do in other areas. We need to equalise not only the voting quota, but the resources available to electoral registration officers throughout the country.

**Mr. Winnick:** My hon. Friend may be interested to know that during my speech I suggested that on Second Reading my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) had made that very point. I now realise that, in fact, it was my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) who said it. I hope that he realises that when he makes such excellent suggestions they fall on fertile ground, at least among Labour Members.

**Mr. Banks:** I am always at my hon. Friend's disposal to give him a few good ideas. He has plenty of his own, but a few of mine might make him an even more formidable parliamentarian.

There is a degree of dissatisfaction on the Labour Benches, and I suspect that if we scratched the surface we would find a similar feeling on the Conservative Benches, about the way that these matters are organised. If the Government accept the amendment, they will show that they are prepared to do something about registration. If they do not, perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us what additional resources he will make available to ensure that the next general election is fought on the maximum possible number of those eligible to vote, and not on an inaccurate register as in 1992.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I shall not repeat all that has been said about electoral registration numbers as that matter has been covered in depth, and I agree with all that has been said. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) said, an important feature of the argument has been overlooked, and that is how we define an area. In electoral terms, are we referring to a shire county and taking that as the skin? Are we talking about a metropolitan district and taking that as the skin? Or are we talking about a London borough and taking that as the skin?

**Mr. Darling:** Both.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Bermingham:** That leaves me a little confused because one area plus another area equals a third area, so which area do we take?

**Mr. Darling:** The intention behind the amendment is that if, when considering the numbers living in a county or a constituency, the commission is satisfied that the register is inaccurate, it may delay the process until it knows exactly how many are in both. It is clear that the same problem arises in both, which is the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

**Mr. Bermingham:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that elucidation, which goes to the heart of the matter. Unless it is known what the electorate will be within the largest skin—which will be a county in the forthcoming review—the correct number of seats cannot be worked out. Unless the norm factor—68,000, 69,000 or whatever—can be divided into the totality of the electorate, we cannot work out how many seats the area should have. It might be 10·2 or 10·3—or it may be 10·5, which would mean 11 instead of 10 seats. We cannot work out what the average constituency should be.

Another feature about the size of the electorate is often overlooked by the commission and should be taken into account in the forthcoming review. In an inner-city area where there is a considerable amount of demolition following compulsory purchase, there will be consequences for the number of electorate who will be in that area when the constituency comes into force. The converse of the coin, which is equally important, is an area where there is continual new build—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the Home Secretary will interrupt his conversation with the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). These points are important to Richmond and to many other areas. If an area has continuing housing redevelopment, it is obvious that there will have been a population movement between the time that the reviews first began—1991—and the time that the recommendations come into operation in about 1995 or 1996. Distortions will be built in to the commission's findings unless it takes those trends into account.

At the last commission hearings—and I again declare my interest in that matter—it was our experience that the commission did not always take into account the demographic trends, nor the development in some areas and the demolition in others. All those factors can affect the totality of the skin and the number of seats within an area. They can also affect the size of constituencies within a county, where there will be a deviation from the norm if those factors are not taken into account. I hope that the Secretary of State agrees that they should be taken into account. Where there is a predictable trend, either because of demolition or because of new build, those trends should be reflected in the way that the skin is constructed so that at the commencement of the next parliamentary round for the new boundaries there is equality of numbers within the county, metropolitan district, borough or whatever.

My hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) were right to say that the key factor is getting the system right and fair so that there is an equalisation of votes. If we use a little common sense—which is not beyond the wit of man—and take into account demographic trends because of demolition and new build, there is some hope that we shall achieve constituencies that are somewhere near the same size, which should be the aim of us all.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** It is a mistake—although this is almost inevitable on the Floor of the House—to read into an argument a point of view that is too partisan. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) followed the hon. Members for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) in claiming that the red meat of party politics is behind all this. I do not believe that that is true, or that those hon. Gentlemen are necessarily pursuing their party advantage—although they may think that they are—in using the arguments that they do.

On Second Reading, there was no serious dissent—certainly not between the two Front Benches—from the proposition that the boundary commissioners should proceed promptly, according to a timetable aimed at the end of 1994. That would make it likely that the next general election will be based on up-to-date boundaries.

No one argues either against the proposition that constituencies should be based as far as possible on equal boundaries. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East invoked the Chartists in support of that principle. We are all Chartists in that respect today.

There is no party difference between us as to the desirability of people registering to be eligible as electors, and of them casting their votes—if we could persuade them all to do so. I do not recall all the occasions when Ministers of any party allegedly fell short on that proposition. It is the first instinct of parliamentarians to attach particular importance to democratic politics. We should ensure as far as possible that everyone is registered, and encourage all to vote.

In the last election, I appeared on a programme with representatives of other parties before an audience of young people who had been selected by the researchers precisely because they had said that they did not intend to vote for any party. The hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and myself all said that we would rather those young people voted against our respective parties than take the cynical view that they should not cast their votes at all. My guess is that practically every right hon. and hon. Member would have made the same response.

We are proposing a fair electoral system based on single member constituencies and on accurate registers that record as many of the electorate as possible. We have already started the process in England without any controversy. There was no protest about the English boundary commission or its timetable. The Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish commissions must start work shortly to meet the timetable on which we have all agreed.

It is necessary for the English commissioners to base their electoral quotas, as they are, on the 1991 electoral register. The other commissioners will work to the 1992 registers.

The amendment says that if, on reflection, the commissioners were to discover particular problems with the registers, delay should intervene. The nature of that delay is not clear from the amendment. Is it suggested that the review should be stopped altogether, until we are persuaded that we have a better register? The amendment urges delay, but that would be inconsistent with the Bill.

Most of the debate centred on the administrative machinery of local government. Without widespread dissent in the past, we have always delivered electoral registers on which to conduct our parliamentary elections. There has been a slight reduction in the proportion of the population who, on the best estimates, appear to be registered—but that pre-dates the community charge, which was widely cited as the reason for that reduction.

In 1991, 95·5 per cent. of the population of England and Wales appeared to be registered, and the figure for Scotland was 96·5 per cent. It appears that there are no figures for Northern Ireland, although one hon. Member gave Northern Ireland top marks for having a high level of registration.

By any international standards, those percentages reflect a very high level of registration. It is a good record. Anybody—including the electoral registration officer—should be alive to any proposal for improving registration still further. I will touch in a moment on what we should do to support electoral registration officers in their work.

For a variety of reasons, a proportion of the population does not register. Scarcely an inhabitant of these islands does not know that he or she is entitled to vote in an election. However, a number of potential electors do not vote because they are not interested. We must have an administrative system that gets them on to the register. We are talking only about administrative steps that might improve the system.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend clarify what would happen if the Local Government Boundary Commission decided to restore the historic county boundaries after the parliamentary commissioners have made their first report? Would they be able to make an interim report, to take such a restoration into account?

**Mr. Clarke:** Clause 3 emphasises that one of the Bill's main aims is to stipulate a cut-off date for local government changes that the boundary commissioners would have to take into account in making their reports. Changes that come into effect before June 1994 will be taken into account by the parliamentary boundary commissioners. In England, that is likely to mean that counties already reviewed will find that the new county boundaries are taken into account. If the Local Government Boundary Commission reviews some counties after that date, it will still be possible at any time for the parliamentary boundary commission to make an interim report—though I imagine that it will concentrate first on publishing its main report.

**Mr. Barnes:** I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has no figures for Northern Ireland, because I obtained some from the Library. They show that since 1987, Northern Ireland's electoral register has increased by 1·2 per cent. and that registration by attainers—a massive problem in England, Wales and Scotland—has risen 7 per cent. Why is it that between 1987 and 1991 the figures improved in Northern Ireland but collapsed in England, Scotland, and Wales?

**Mr. Clarke:** They did not collapse. They fell by a comparatively small percentage. The hon. Gentleman is one of those who has long campaigned that the community charge would have that effect. It may have done in respect of a few people. I do not deny that some people—partly because of all the publicity attached to the community charge—decided not to register because they thought that they would thereby avoid paying the community charge. They were misguided if they believed that, as everyone knows. It was not particularly reputable for such people to

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go to such lengths to avoid paying for their local government services, and to give up their votes. Although I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman is sincere, he has never convincingly made the case that the community charge damaged the accuracy of the electoral register.

**Mr. Barnes** *rose*——

**Mr. Clarke:** I will not exchange anecdotal evidence. We are all experienced campaigners, and we have all had anecdotal experiences. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) related quite an amusing anecdote about people who are not on the register. Usually, the basic reason is that they do not realise that, to be on the register, they have to be resident at the address in question on 10 October, or 15 September in Northern Ireland. In any election campaign, one meets a lot of people who are not living at the address at which they ought to have been registered on the date in question.

Others fail to complete the registration form, or do so frivolously—which is a criminal offence. Most elections produce local newspaper pieces about, for example, a budgerigar that was given the vote because its owner thought that it would be witty to register it. We are dealing with those on the fringes who are not very keen on registering, not necessarily because of the community charge.

When I am canvassing, I always remind myself—and opinion pollsters would do well to remind themselves—that about one fifth of those who register will not bother to vote in any case. Many will not want to vote, perhaps for religious reasons. We hear counsels of perfection in regard to putting names on to the register, but a sizeable proportion of the population could not care less whether their names are on it. It is our duty as politicians, whatever our party, to seek to overcome that, and to encourage people to register for the sake of democracy—conceding that they can vote for our opponents if they wish to. Given the background of sheer apathy and active refusal, I think that 95·5 per cent. is not a bad score.

6.30 pm

Other hon. Members have given examples from their electoral experience. In my constituency, one sector of the population is particularly badly represented on the register: members of the armed forces. Most of the inaccuracies in the register concern the RAF station at Newton, and that is the source of most of the complaints from people who find that they are not entitled to vote. When election day comes, the overall high turnout in Rushcliffe is pulled down because the Newton turnout is low: by that time, most of those who are on the register are serving elsewhere.

That is a practical difficulty, which can be set against the claims that the names missing from the register are all those of inner-city Labour voters who are avoiding the community charge—people from Hackney and Newham, North-West. We need to tackle the difficulties that face electoral registration officers by ensuring that the names of serious, willing voters—whatever their background—are put on the register. In 1990, only about 65 per cent. of those in the armed forces were registered. Matters have improved, but I urge the military authorities to make greater efforts. Perhaps their new computerised system will make that possible.

**Mr. Donald Anderson** (Swansea, East): The overall figures are pretty impressive. The Home Secretary has urged the military authorities to make a special effort. What similar action is he taking in regard to authorities in difficult areas, and what resources is he providing to ensure that one vote equals one value? Unless he can reassure us, we shall begin to suspect that the Government are concerned about time rather than achieving an accurate register.

**Mr. Clarke:** I was coming to that, because I believe that it represents the substance of the debate. Hon. Members have made practical suggestions about possible improvements, but, given the discrepancies over figures that have been cited—overall figures, and figures relating to specific parts of the country—only a few of those suggestions are likely to have much impact. Clearly, it is for the Home Office—and, most important, for electoral registration officers in the local areas concerned—to have regard to such matters, and I am sure that they do.

A typical electoral registration officer—or the best of such officers—goes in for postal and hand deliveries of the forms, and most canvass personally as well. That needs to be supported by publicity campaigns, which have been mentioned already. Such campaigns have always been used to encourage registration. This year, the Home Office proposes to spend £617,000 on them; the Scottish Office will also become involved. Some local authorities have their own campaigns. We shall continue to advertise to encourage eligible people to complete and return their forms. I have my doubts: I believe that the people concerned know perfectly well that they are entitled to vote, and that the forms are being sent out. Nevertheless, reminding them to find out whether they have a form and are registered may jog their consciences.

We must also continually revise and update our code of practice for electoral registration officers. At present we are doing that, while also producing a series of individual practice notes designed to maximise the efficiency of the process. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who follows such matters closely, is probably one of the few hon. Members who are familiar with the practice notes.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** I am a little annoyed with the Home Secretary. He had a go at me when I was not in the Chamber, and he had another go at me a moment ago. I can survive that, but, as we are in Committee, I should be grateful if he would allow me to intervene now.

I realise that the Home Secretary is a great Secretary of State and I am only a grubby oik—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I thought that that would go down well. In my speech, however, I was not trying to plead in a partial way for Newham, North-West; I said that I was raising a major issue. It is no good the Home Secretary saying that the Home Office will advertise, pointing out that voting is part of people's duty. There is a penalty for non-registration. Why not copy the television licence advertising, which tells viewers that if they do not fill in a form they will probably have to pay a fine? Will the Home Secretary tell us, statistically rather than anecdotally, how many people have been fined for not filling in a registration form?

**Mr. Clarke:** That was dealt with earlier; again, the hon. Gentleman was not in the Chamber. I congratulate him on his first insight, but I cannot congratulate him on his

second. If he considers that he was not making a partisan speech, and was not suggesting that the Bill was aimed particularly at the Labour vote in Newham, North-West, he must underrate his ability to introduce a partisan fire and fervour to almost every point that he makes.

We in this country go so far as to operate compulsory registration—and rightly so: no one here would want to go back on that. Hon. Members have already contrasted the position here with that in the United States, where registration is voluntary and the parties must try to enrol specific groups. That is a very poor system, compared with ours. The criminal offence is failure to send back the form, or putting inaccurate information on the form, but as far as I am aware the prosecuting authorities have not considered it sensible to bring any prosecutions on that ground.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West may believe that the way in which to raise the registration figure from 95·5 per cent. to 100 per cent. is to prosecute people who register their budgerigars, but I do not think that that is the most practical approach. More effective measures are contained in the individual practice notes that we have started to produce in recent years. The first two, on performance indicators and publicity, were published in 1989. The third, on the community charge register, was published in 1990, and gave advice on how electoral registration officers should make the most effective use of their statutory right of access to the community charge register at each stage in the compilation of the electoral register. Some electoral registration officers used the community charge register to increase the number of registered electors for electoral purposes.

The fourth, on the pre-printing of names on the electoral form and the carrying forward of names on the register, was issued in 1991. In the longer term, we have produced a leaflet on electoral registration and the electoral process, aimed at 16 and 17-year-olds. It was distributed to electoral registration officers, and publicised by means of a press advertising campaign aimed at teachers, together with a new leaflet on voting by post or by proxy.

Hon. Members may claim that even that has not achieved more than a 95·5 per cent. registration, but, in my opinion, the likely practical effect of that list of steps taken by the Home Office in the past two or three years exceeds that of most of the proposals that have been made in the past three hours of debate.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): When my right hon. and learned Friend prepares the next set of practice notes, will he consider the problems that arise when returning officers send out registration forms as early as the end of August, six weeks ahead of registration date? In my view, that leads to more under-registration than almost anything else.

**Mr. Clarke:** My hon. Friend's suggestion and the suggestions made by the hon. Members for Perry Barr and for Derbyshire, North-East can be taken into account as we put out the practice notes.

To return to the amendment, we are talking about the means by which we can help good electoral registration officers to improve their performance by getting people on to the electoral register. That is not a matter for the Bill. It will continue to be done, I am sure, in all those local authorities where electoral registration is given the priority that it ought to have. The amendment is wide of the point. It caused the hon. Member for Makerfield to ask his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) what it meant—a perfectly sensible question.

Without being pedantic, there are other questions that one could ask about what exactly the amendment means. Whatever its precise effect may be, the amendment is based on the argument that if the parliamentary boundary commission, which is not responsible for the registration process, is satisfied that there is some inadequacy in the register, delays should then occur. Whether that means that one should stop the redistribution in that part of the country, or that one should wait until someone discovers whether any of these measures can increase registration, is left unsaid. The amendment is impracticable.

The House agreed on Second Reading that it wants the parliamentary boundary commissions to proceed on the timetable that is expected by most people: that the end of 1994 is reasonable and that the new boundaries should come into effect at the next general election. The amendment is inconsistent with that timetable. We can continue to take on board sensible suggestions about how to improve the registration process and the matters to which the boundary commissions should pay regard at inquiries. The amendment serves no worthwhile purpose. It would cause needless delay. I ask the Committee to reject it.

**Mr. Darling:** The Secretary of State has followed a well-established court room technique by rubbishing the amendment. He went so far as not to read it, therefore misquoted what it says and then suggested that the Committee should reject it for that reason. I agree that there is no serious dissent that a review is inevitable, but to claim that my hon. Friends were disingenuous when they said that the Government were seeking party-political advantage is going a bit too far. Does anybody imagine that the Government would have introduced the Bill if they did not smell party-political advantage? It is not right to say that there have been no protests so far. Ever since the poll tax legislation was introduced in Scotland and then in England, people have realised that one inevitable effect would be a reduction in the number of people on the electoral register.

The amendment is different from the way in which it was represented by the Secretary of State. It proposes that

"if the Commission is satisfied that the electorate in any area is to a significant degree different from the population in that area who are qualified to vote then they may delay submitting their report until they are satisfied as to the accuracy of the register."

That means that if the boundary commission believes, on the evidence before it, that there is evidence to suggest that it is working on a false assumption as to the electorate, it is open to it to delay submitting its report until it is satisfied about the accuracy of the figures. That seems to me to make sense and to be absolutely straightforward. I told my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that it will not matter whether the boundary commission is considering the quota for county purposes or the actual numbers within the constituency. The boundary commission can hear evidence and can decide to delay making its final report until it is absolutely sure that it is working on something like an accurate register.

6.45 pm

The debate has made it clear that more people are convinced that the registers are inaccurate than those who are convinced that they are accurate. It is time that the Government accepted that in many cases the registers need to be updated and made accurate. It is wrong for the Secretary of State to say that we are dealing with people who are not very keen about registering. In many cases we are dealing with people who are very keen indeed to do so but who, for some reason, have been missed off the electoral register. To say that a lot have been left off for religious reasons seems to me a pretty low reason.

This is a fundamental, not an administrative, issue. If the boundary commission is working on the wrong figures, it will get everything else wrong. If it does not know how many people live in a county or in a region in Scotland, it cannot get the quota right. If the boundary commission does not know how many people live within one of its proposed constituencies, it follows that the discrepancy will be even greater than it is now.

A number of reasons have been advanced for this inaccuracy. As has already been said, it has become socially acceptable to avoid registration. I do not believe that it should be acceptable to avoid registration. Some of my hon. Friends drew attention to the discrepancy between the way in which we treat poll tax registration and the way in which we treat electoral registration. When it comes to the poll tax, every effort is made to follow up those who are not on the register. There is a real incentive to register. A penalty will be imposed on those people who are not registered.

While the onus is on the poll tax payer to prove that he or she ought not to be on the register, the electoral registration officer would have to satisfy the court that he had sent out the form in the first place in order to prove that it had not been returned and that therefore an offence had taken place. All we ask is that exactly the same enthusiasm should be shown in ensuring that people are on the electoral register. If Parliament decides that it should be an offence not to be registered, all reasonable means at our disposal should be used to ensure that the register is accurate and that people who ought to be registered are on the register. It was done for the poll tax; it ought to be done for the electoral register.

**Mr. David Clelland** (Tyne Bridge): Although the Secretary of State may be right when he says that there will never be 100 per cent. registration, that is no excuse for not trying to get as full registration as possible. The Secretary of State has acknowledged today that he knows that 4·5 per cent. of the people in England are not registered. When the boundary commission draws up its proposals for constituency boundaries, ought it not to take that figure into account?

**Mr. Darling:** My hon. Friend makes precisely the point that I was seeking to make. The boundary commission ought to take into account the fact that it is common ground that overall the electoral register is at least 4 per cent. inaccurate. The Minister who wound up the Second Reading debate said that he sympathised with those who believed that the register is inaccurate.

The hon. Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and for Makerfield made the point that when calculating the quota for Glasgow and Manchester it is important to know how many people are on the electoral register. The hon. Members for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) suggested that it was simply an administrative matter. Both hon. Members referred to housing estates in their constituencies that had not been included on the electoral register. When deciding whether constituencies are either above or below the quota, every person who is eligible to vote ought to be considered. I would say to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, yes, it is possible to tackle the issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) drew my attention to one case where the electoral registration officer in Grampian had written to people with foreign-sounding names to find out whether they ought to be on the register. It is up to him, apparently, to decide whether to do that. I wonder why on earth he is spending so much effort on it. If he has got so much time on his hands, there are other things that both he and other electoral registration officers could be doing to ensure that the registers are accurate.

We have suggested many things that we believe that the Government ought to do. However, they have been dismissed by the Secretary of State. We suggested that advertising ought to be stepped up, not just to jog people's memories but to remind them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, of the penalties that might be visited upon them if they do not register. If the Government are prepared to spend money on advertising the facility for overseas voting, they ought to spend money on advertisements to encourage people to ensure that their names are on the electoral register. If the Government thought that they could get more Tory voters on to the registers, I am sure that they would spend public money. If there were ever to be a referendum here on Maastricht, or anything else, a good number of Conservative Members would, I believe, want to make sure that the register of electors was up to date.

We have put forward many suggestions that would make electoral registers more accurate, because it is a fundamental matter. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West said, some areas may gain seats while others lose them. If we are to embark on that process, it is important to make sure that we have the right figures to start with. It is also important to know on what basis we are doing it. We should not simply hazard a guess.

I think that we were absolutely right to table the amendment. The Secretary of State's dismissive response showed that the Government are not interested in whether people are registered to vote. For that reason, we shall press the amendment to a Division.

**Mr. Rooker:** I want to deal with a couple of points, one of which was not raised in the debate. Only the Home Secretary made international comparisons. He said that our rate of registration—95 per cent.—compared well internationally.

Our register must be more accurate than most others because it is done from scratch each year for a single-member, first-past-the-post system. In other words, there is more scope for distortion in our allocation of seats than under other European systems. That is not an argument against other electoral systems but a fact.

Italian electoral registers are compiled at constituency level and are revised annually over three months. Our registers are compiled from scratch at the end of the year.

In Italy, whatever we might say about its Government, the names of people who do not vote without a justifiable reason are noted for five years on the public record.

Electoral registers in Switzerland are compiled and revised continually. Our poll tax register, unlike the electoral register, is revised continuously and is bound, therefore, to contain more people. Electors in Switzerland can abstain if they have a justifiable reason, without which they are subject to a small fine.

Electoral registers in Denmark, the most quoted country in the House in recent weeks, are compiled on the basis of a central register of persons, but it is revised continuously; it is not an annual snapshot. The chances of it being accurate, therefore, are greater than in this country, where voting is not compulsory. Electoral registers in Belgium are continuously kept up to date and voting is compulsory.

Those are just a few examples of where the mechanism and administration of the system are so different from ours that they make nonsense of the Home Secretary's point that our 95 per cent. registration rate compares well internationally.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong in saying that our registers are compiled from scratch every year; they start with the previous year's register. Sometimes, electoral registration officers have to go through the registers removing people whom they kept including but who had moved away. The hon. Gentleman has not produced a figure comparable to my 95 per cent. Although I have no facts to knock him down with about the electoral registration system in the wilds of Apulia being better than Britain's, I am surprised by his glowing description of Italian and Spanish levels of administration of the electoral system. We must try to improve our system, but it is nonsense to say that it compares badly with others.

**Mr. Rooker:** I do not accept that. If our electoral system were the bee's knees, it would have been used for the poll tax, which has a continuously rolling register. That is not the electoral registration system that we use.

I do not accept the Home Secretary's argument, which we first heard during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which established the poll tax. No intellectual argument was advanced for our having two different registers. The electoral register is a snapshot and is set up from scratch because of electoral registration officers' discretion to dead-wood the register. The use of more modern computer practices in recent years has caused massive shifts in the electoral register. It is set up from scratch each year and the Home Secretary cannot gainsay that. He seeks to give the impression that it is a one-off register—that once people sign they remain on it for ever, which is not true.

**Mr. Barnes:** The chance to establish a rolling register will present itself on 12 February, when I shall introduce my private Member's Bill, which will tackle the problems that the Home Office is refusing to tackle.

**Mr. Rooker:** The Home Secretary read out the practice notes, which are to be applauded and I do so willingly, but the Home Office cannot say what it does to monitor the effect of those notes. There is no systematic means of it discovering whether new notes and ideas work. The Government's refusal to monitor the advice that they give leads me to believe that, for party-political reasons, they do not want to know.

*Question put*, That the amendment be made:—

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 244, Noes 303.

**Division No. 38]** **[8.55 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian

MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Thomas McAvoy and**
**Mr. Eric Illsley.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard

Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and**
**Mr. David Davis.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Mr. Darling:** I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 9, leave out from 'words' to end of line and insert '12 years'.

**The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. GeoffreyLofthouse):** With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments:

No. 14, in page 2, line 9, leave out 'twelve' and insert 'fifteen'.

No. 18, in page 2, line 9, at end insert

'and the addition at the end of that subsection of the words "save that a Boundary Commission shall not submit such a report if less than ten years has elapsed since the date of the last General Election based upon new boundaries.".'.

No. 19, in page 2, line 9, at end insert

'and the addition at the end of that subsection of the words "save that where more than two years have elapsed since the first General Election to be held after the eighth year in which a General Election was held on new boundaries, a Boundary Commission shall not submit such a report until another General Election shall have been held.".'.

**Mr. Darling:** This group of amendments deals with the aim canvassed for the Bill—the time that should elapse between boundary reviews. The Government propose that a review should take place between eight and 12 years after the previous review, whereas at present it takes place between 10 and 15 years. The amendment proposes a fixed review every 12 years.

Since 1945, an average Parliament has lasted about 3·8 years. The purpose of our amendment is to ensure that boundaries remain in existence for about three Parliaments. That has some importance, as there ought to be a link between Member and constituency. During the past few weeks, discussions have taken place about the appropriate method of electing Members to the House and to other places, and those discussions will continue. I feel strongly that, whatever the system, there ought to be a link between the Member and the constituency. Clearly, if the nature of a constituency changes too often, the link will diminish in importance. If the Government's amendment to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 is carried, in some cases boundaries might remain intact for only two Parliaments, which does not seem to be a very long time.

It is interesting that there have been wide fluctuations during the history of boundary reviews. When Parliament reviewed the situation in 1944, it decided that a review period of between three to seven years would be appropriate to get rid of the anomalies that had arisen. During the 1950s, when reviews were carried out by the then boundary commission, it was decided that it was not practical to carry out a review in that short time. In 1958, the period was increased to between 10 and 15 years—quite a big jump.

The Government are proposing a compromise of between eight and 12 years. There is not much difference between three and seven years, if one consider the old upper limit of seven, and the eight-year period, which is the lowest that the Government anticipate.

When the Minister replies to the debate, it would be interesting if he could let us have the Government's thinking as to why a period of between eight and 12 years is thought appropriate. We all know that the population has changed significantly since 1976 in some areas, but I am not sure that it will continue to change that dramatically. An alternative would be a rolling register as used for the poll tax, with continuing reports instead of the occasional interim report by the boundary commission.

I wonder whether the Government are contemplating that the boundary commission will prepare several reports during the eight to 12-year programme rather than one report for the whole of the United Kingdom. It has been suggested that, even with the increased resources anticipated by the Bill, the boundary commission will find it difficult to produce a report for the United Kingdom every eight to 12 years. If it has to produce an entire report after eight years, it will require a considerable amount of work, not merely to make the report but to deal with all the local inquiries and to hear the representations required and allowed in the 1986 Act.

Are the Government considering several reports, perhaps dealing with parliamentary constituency boundaries in the same way that the Government are dealing with local authority reviews in England, where it is envisaged that reports will have five tranches—to use the Government's phrase? The Government could be proposing one report for the United Kingdom every eight to 12 years. If that is the case, I should be interested to know whether they are satisfied that it can be produced.

Our amendment suggests a fixed term of 12 years, which would have the advantage of reducing the scope for a Government to vary the term to seek political advantage.

*[Mr. Darling]*

As became clear during debate on amendment No. 1, it has been suggested that that is what the Government plan to do. If a fixed term were chosen, the Government would not be able to advance or delay it, although they could invite the House to vote down the report, which is also an option at present.

7.15 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** It is up to the boundary commission to decide when it produces a report, within the window of years allowed by the law. It is not up to the Government to decide when it should do so.

**Mr. Darling:** I appreciate that, but the Government are the architect and sponsor of the Bill and I therefore wonder if they have any idea of what they want.

For example, the English boundary commission could produce one report for England within eight years, or it might decide that it could not do so, and produce two reports for a group of counties instead, thus carrying out a rolling programme. In time, all the counties would be reviewed every eight to 12 years, but not all at the same time.

If the Minister is making inquiries, could he tell me whether the piecemeal approach would be possible under the Bill as drafted? If not, I should like to know about it, because it has been suggested that it may be a tall order to expect an entire review every eight years. Perhaps the commission will decide to carry out a review every 12 years, which is the upper end of the scale, in which case it will be doing what many people think it ought to have done within the 10 to 15-year period allowed at present.

It is probably common ground that the present situation is not entirely satisfactory. One of the principal problems is that the boundary commission started work in 1976, but an election was not fought on those boundaries until about seven years later. When it was fought, the boundaries were seven years out of date. The April 1992 election was fought on boundaries that are about 15 years out of date.

I should be grateful if the Minister would let us know why the Government chose a period of eight to 12 years. When the Select Committee on Home Affairs last considered the matter, it thought that the lower period in force during the 1940s and 1950s was far too short. It recognised some of the difficulties with a long period and came down against a fixed term of 12 years because that circumscribed room for manoeuvre. I am not sure that the Committee was right, because if there is an injunction requiring the production of a report within any fixed period, the commission has to be tied to it, especially if it is to produce one report. Clearly, if it is going to produce a rolling programme, the flexibility to do so within a four-year period allows it to do that. There is something to be said for having a fixed term, so that we know where we are and when the report will be produced and we can proceed on that basis.

I do not wish to say much more on the subject. I am not sure how much interest hon. Members have in the time allowed. I think that there is far more interest in some of the other difficulties with which we have dealt and in those with which we shall deal later. However, there are several questions for the Government to answer and part of the purpose of the amendment is to explore them.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I rise to speak to amendments Nos. 18 and 19 tabled in my name and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The Government's purpose in changing the frequency of reviews from 10 to 15-year intervals to eight to 12-year intervals may mean that some constituencies will exist for only two Parliaments before new constituencies are formed. More frequent changes to the constituency that a Member of Parliament represents could have the not altogether desirable effect of undermining the development of a long-term relationship between a Member of Parliament and all the parts of a constituency.

A degree of stability of parliamentary constituency boundaries is desirable, even though it is obviously sensible to move towards more frequent changes than take place at present. However, if the Bill is enacted as drafted, every second Parliament some Members of Parliament may be uncertain about the boundaries that they will face at the forthcoming general election. I doubt whether that is altogether good for representation; certainly, it would not be good for the democratic process where it involves the party organisations preparing to offer a choice at each general election.

Amendment No. 18 aims to ensure that no review can be implemented within 10 years of the date of the last general election to be based on new boundaries. Ideally, I should have preferred a differently worded amendment which would enable enactment to take place at a time that was separate from the date of the report. However, I understand that such an amendment would have offended against the long title of the Bill, so I have drafted the amendment to tackle the problem in a different way and to prevent the boundary commission from reporting if the consequence of doing so is to produce a review in fewer than 10 years. The Government are probably right to argue that infrequent reviews lead to wide discrepancies in electorates. However, stability should also be recognised as a desirable end.

Amendment No. 19 addresses another problem: reviews that are completed just before a general election and implemented almost immediately after. Changes which were finalised only late in 1982 were implemented in the 1983 general election. That is an example of the mischief with which the amendment seeks to deal. If we leave the Bill as it is, the future shape of some constituencies could be known for less than a year before a general election. That would also be detrimental to effective representation and democratic choice.

I propose that we consider basing the Bill on the principle that the commission should complete a review within two years of a general election. Assuming that a Parliament lasts for four or five years—of course, that is a little longer than the average—that would allow local parties and Members of Parliament to prepare for the new boundaries. Although both my amendments inevitably refer to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 rather than the Bill, I hope that they are clear and acceptable to the Government.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): I wish to refer to amendment No. 14, tabled in my name and that of my right hon. and hon. Friends. The points have largely been

made by the hon. Members for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) and for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It is a question of finding the right period. Indeed, the Secretary of State spoke in those terms. Obviously, the objective of moving forward what has just been referred to as the "window" within which the boundary commission has to report from between 10 and 15 years to between eight and 12 years is to allow more frequent changes to boundaries. I agree that more frequent changes are not necessarily a good thing. There is a need for a degree of stability in constituency boundaries. It is desirable to allow a degree of identity to grow up within a constituency, especially if it operates on a single-Member basis.

We boast about the link that is supposed to exist between a Member of Parliament and a constituency. If the boundaries are changed too rapidly and fundamentally, that link is destroyed. It takes some time for the link to develop. If there have been major changes, it usually takes one or two elections before people become completely familiar with the new boundaries. The Government's objective seems to be that boundaries should change after every second election. That would mean that people would never become familiar with the boundaries. It is desirable to allow a little more time between changes. We have tabled our amendment to increase the window from eight to 15 years in an effort to give the boundary commission more time, largely in the hope that that will result in greater stability. I find amendments Nos. 2 and 18 equally acceptable and I would support them if there were a Division.

When boundaries change, a certain degree of change has to take place within constituency associations. That may not be a great problem for Members of Parliament from Great Britain because the local government units under which they operate are more sensible. Unfortunately, the legislation in Northern Ireland is such that we regularly find that when constituencies change we have to break up branches and re-form them. I hope that we shall tackle that problem when we discuss another amendment tabled in my name, which seeks to allow us to operate on more sensible local government boundaries for the purposes of the Bill. The objective of amendment No. 14 is to create a little more stability.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I should like to deal with each amendment in turn, but before doing so I shall answer several of the questions that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) asked. If I understood his questions correctly, I can cover them quickly. There will be four boundary commission reports—one each for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There will not be one report for the whole of the United Kingdom. That stems from the legislative arrangements in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986.

**Mr. Darling:** The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that there will be one report for each country at the same time so that all the reports are with the relevant Secretary of State at the end of 1994. It is the Government's intention that the new boundaries will be in operation before the next election. That is the point that I made. But I asked whether it would be open to the commission to produce a report every two or three years on a rolling basis for England, which is much bigger than the other countries.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I was coming to that point. No, it will not be possible. Under the 1986 Act, there must be a report for the whole of England. The final report cannot be produced piecemeal, although, of course, the provisional recommendations are produced piecemeal.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central also asked why we had chosen 12 years. The best that I can do is to refer him back to what I said in reply to the Second Reading debate. We have chosen 12 years because 15 years has allowed too great a disparity between electorates as a result of population movements in that period. The size of constituencies ranges from 42,000 electors to more than 90,000 in England, from 32,000 to 70,000 in Wales, and from 23,000 to 78,000 in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman might question whether 12 years is short enough when population movements are so substantial, but we have picked 12 years as the period which gives the continuity of constituency boundaries and Members' relations with them to which several hon. Members referred.

Indeed, we have adopted the period suggested to the Select Committee by the deputy chairman of the English boundary commission some time ago. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said, amendment No. 2 requires the commission to submit its report on the twelfth anniversary of the previous report. I accept that that proposal has some attractions. It would ensure that reports were not so frequent as the new minimum period of eight years would make technically possible, and it would avoid the possibility of upheavals in constituency boundaries more than once a decade. In some ways, it would also be convenient for everyone to know in advance when D day had to be.

7.30 pm

However seductive the idea, alas I fear that such a fixed date would present some real problems for the commissions. They would feel obliged to start their work just as early as they would with the eight to 12 years rule because they would never be able to tell in advance how long they might be held up by local inquiries or judicial challenge, let alone the exigencies of their own work. The open and responsive rules that the commissions must follow mean that completion dates do not finally lie in their hands, nor can they be accurately predicted.

Indeed, a look back to the timing of previous commission inquiries and reports shows that they have usually slipped back towards the latter end of their reporting window. There is no reason to think that that would change in the future. Indeed, quite the contrary, because that built-in uncertainty in their timetable is why the commissions have always been given a period of years in which they are required to submit their reports. It gives the commissions the elbow room which experience shows that they need.

The major effect of amendment No. 2 would be to make it inevitable that the commissions would have to sit on their report for a period before presenting it. If the review had gone smoothly, that might be a year or two. If a general election were called during that time, it would have to be fought on old boundaries—out-of-date boundaries based on out-of-date registers—when more up-to-date proposals were available. That would defeat the central purpose of the Bill: to secure as up-to-date boundaries, based on the latest electoral registers, as reasonably practicable. For that reason, I ask the House to reject amendment No. 2.

**Mr. Darling:** The Minister said that for each country there could be only one report under the parent Act of 1986. May I draw his attention to section 2(1) of that Act, which provides:

"For the purpose of the continuous review of the distribution of seats at parliamentary elections, there shall . . . be four . . . Commissions".

Section 3(1) says:

"Each Boundary Commission shall . . . submit to the Secretary of State reports"

—in the plural—

"with respect to the whole of that part of the United Kingdom"

—and goes on to say what those should contain. Subsection (2) also refers to reports in the plural. Given the language used, how can the Minister be so certain that the commissions cannot produce a multiple number of reports? Whether that is desirable is another matter. Have I missed a provision that would require the commissions to produce just one report for the whole of England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Lloyd:** We have both missed that provision and I shall not find it in the few seconds available to me. However, where the Act refers to parts of the United Kingdom it means England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and not parts of England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. As usual, the hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point and I shall try to supply him with the exact reference, or references, in the Act before the end of the evening.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) urged on me amendment No. 14. The amendment would change the cycle of eight to 12 years to eight to 15 years. I do not know whether that is what the hon. Gentleman intended, but, if so, I must discourage him. I have some sympathy with his motive of allowing more time between reviews to place more emphasis on the continuity of connections between a Member of Parliament and his constituency and between constituency associations and their constituencies than on equal numbers. But the period of eight to 15 years that he proposes is considerably less satisfactory than the present range of 10 to 15 years.

Obviously, the commissions need elbow room for unexpected delays, complications and the unpredictable. The time-consuming process of local inquiries and possible court proceedings mean that a range of time must be allowed, but to expand that period from the current five years to seven years, rather than reduce it to four years as the Bill proposes, is to move in the wrong direction. It would increase uncertainty about when the next reorganisation would be introduced. I agree that frequent reorganisations would be unwelcome.

However, the amendment would also give an undesirable latitude to when the commissions' reports should be ready. The commissions may feel obliged to make judgments on whether it would be politic to complete their reports, thus being drawn into political controversy. For that reason, and because the amendment flies directly in the face of the intention of the Bill to ensure that the commissions' work is speeded up, I ask the Committee to join me in rejecting amendment No. 15.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) tabled amendments Nos. 18 and 19. As always, I listened to him carefully but especially so this time as the wording of his amendments, particularly amendment No. 19, was as complex and testing as if it had been drawn up by a talented and experienced Government draftsman. He explained that he wanted to protect the practice of more frequent reviews but, within that, the continuity of relationships within constituencies and between a constituency and its Member of Parliament. He also wanted to avoid changes just before a general election, but, on a quick reading of his amendments, I am not sure whether he would necessarily succeed in doing that.

I have some sympathy with the idea that there must be at least two general elections between a review and much sympathy also with the belief that there is value in continuity in the relationships between a Member of Parliament and his constituents. However, all commissions seem to report nearer to the end rather than the beginning of the time allowed, so some of the hon. Gentleman's concerns would, in practice, be answered by the commissions' behaviour, the timetable that they set themselves, and the time taken by the inquiries that they hear after receiving objections.

However, I have more substantial reasons for saying that I cannot accept the amendments. Amendment No. 18 would seek to ensure that no report could be made sooner than 10 years after the date of the first general election held on the existing boundaries. Depending on the timing of the report in relation to that first general election, that could mean that no new report would be submitted for up to 14 years. The fact that that could happen was shown when the boundary commission reported in 1969 with recommendations based on 1965 registers, but the first election under its proposals did not take place until February 1974. If the amendment had been in place then, the next proposals would have had to wait until 1984—19 years after the base date of the previous review.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland also proposed an amendment with the same objective. However, it, too, could delay reports for up to 14 years and possibly a little longer. I have some sympathy with what he is trying to achieve. A balance must be drawn between equality of electors in constituencies where there are rapid movements in population, and continuity between Members of Parliament and their constituents and within constituencies. I believe that we have drawn the line in the right place. In so far as the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland seeks to ensure that change is not disturbingly frequent, I agree with him, but believe that the exigencies of the process will ensure that.

My basic objection to his amendments is that they could lead to gaps and would frequently lead to gaps that were close to the present ones, which it is the Bill's intention to close. We would be back where we are now, with periods that are too long. For that reason, I invite the Committee to reject those amendments.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving some thought to my amendments. I was also pleased to hear that he accepts the underlying intention of amendment No. 18—that there should be a gap of two Parliaments before change is implemented. I find it difficult to believe that it is beyond the wit of parliamentary draftsmen to achieve the objective that he and I apparently share. If my amendment is defectively drafted, I take full responsibility as I drafted it. However, the Minister's response to that amendment is somewhat encouraging and I ask him at least to consider, between now and Report

stage, whether it might be possible to meet our common aim of not allowing the electoral boundary map to be redrawn within a period of two Parliaments.

The purpose of amendment No. 19 was certainly not to protract the process in the manner adumbrated by the Minister. He is doubtless right in saying that it could have that effect. I readily acknowledge that part of the reason for that is the tightness of the Bill's drafting, which has made it impossible to do what I believe would be more sensible: require the Government to lay an Order in Council implementing the boundary commission's recommendation close to the date on which it is finalised. Had it been possible to do that, we could have avoided the difficulties to which he rightly drew attention.

Does the hon. Gentleman share the view that it is undesirable to produce a boundary change flat up against a general election, and that it is better for democracy and stability for those who organise elections—the political parties, all of which are equally affected—to have some time in which to operate within the new boundaries before the election date is decided?

**Mr. Lloyd:** I certainly think that it is more convenient for political parties to have a longer period in which to organise matters. However, I am not so sure that it is necessarily greatly in the interests of the electorate or the working of parliamentary democracy, although there are arguments both ways. If one of the amendments were adjusted—as presently drafted it would not succeed—it could ensure that there was no election within two years of a boundary commission report being produced. However, one must bear in mind—it certainly weighs heavily with the Government—that to put on ice the proposals for more up-to-date boundaries while an election is fought on older, more out-of-date boundaries is not necessarily in the interests of parliamentary democracy and the smooth running of the system.

The hon. Gentleman asked me nicely to reconsider and I shall not refuse. Although I have some sympathy with his desire for continuity, I suspect that it would be impossible to devise a way of ensuring that continuity without allowing for the period between reviews coming into effect to be drawn out to much the same length as at present. I think that he encountered that difficulty in his amendments. I shall reconsider the matter, but I am not optimistic of finding a solution that satisfies both of us.

7.45 pm

**Mr. Darling:** I was hoping that, by now, the Minister might have received the advice that I was seeking. While he was speaking, I thought that he received a piece of paper containing that advice. If that is not so, perhaps we shall have to wait.

Section 3 of the 1986 Act states:

"Each Boundary Commission shall . . . submit to the Secretary of State reports"—

plural—

"with respect to the whole of that part of the United Kingdom".

That means that each boundary commission will produce reports in respect of that part of the United Kingdom for which it is responsible and seems to suggest that they can produce multiple reports. If I have missed something, perhaps the Minister will intervene.

**Mr. Lloyd:** There was something that I missed—the arrival of a piece of paper while I was talking. If I can read the handwriting, I believe that it states that section 3(2) of the Act refers to a period of 10 to 15 years from the last report. Under section 3(1), each boundary commission has to submit a single report on its last periodic review. If the hon. Gentleman will wait until later in the debate, I shall check those references myself. I said that he might have the answer before the end of the evening. The night is still young and I still hope that I can oblige him. He can refer to the reference while listening to other hon. Members speak, as will I.

**Mr. Darling:** Subject to any ruling by you, Mr. Morris, or whoever occupies the Chair for the debate on the next group of amendments, I think that the matter might still be in order then as it relates to reports.

Subsection (2) appears to refer to reports produced in accordance with subsection (1), which does not rule out multiple reports. It states that each commission may produce reports—plural—with respect to that part of the United Kingdom for which it is responsible. Subsection (2) merely states that the commissions must report between 10 to 15 years after they last did so. That could be taken to imply that there will be only one report, but the Minister should consider that aspect.

If there is to be a possibility of reports being produced every eight years, at some stage in the future the boundary commission may say that it cannot possibly deal with the matter for the whole of England and would prefer to produce a series of reports. Such an approach has been heralded by the local government attitude and is expressly taken into account when dealing with clause 3.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) raised the issue—as I did—of the frequency with which reports should be considered. Like him, and possibly the Minister—I may be stretching a point there—I think that there is something to be said for allowing constituencies to last more than two elections.

If there is to be a regular review, I assume that there will not be dramatic changes such as we might see in the reports that we shall consider in two years' time, although it is conceivable that there will be. In my constituency the last time around—it was not my constituency then—a large community was transferred from it into another constituency, and a correspondingly large community was transferred into it. Clearly, there is something to be said for fostering the links between a Member and a constituency—hence there is something to be said for leaving a constituency intact for some time.

Large rural constituencies are different. I am not sure that the boundary of Caithness and Sutherland has changed in recent memory—it has merely encompassed the two counties. But in urban constituencies such as those of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) and myself there is a measure of community feeling and people need to identify with their Member of Parliament. That is difficult enough given the natural movement of people, but eight years is also a rather short period.

The Minister did not hold out much of change. He could more bluntly have said that there was no hope at all, but he was being nice to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland and said that he would think again—before rejecting the idea on Report or Third Reading.

I am prepared to accept that my suggestion of fixed terms of 12 years is not without its defects, but my purpose

*[Mr. Darling]*

was to ensure that as long as we have single-Member constituencies and set great store by the link between a Member and a constituency, a decent period is needed before they are changed.

The Minister complained legitimately that constituencies based on electorates that no longer exist undermine the whole concept, but the problem that we face arose 10 or 15 years ago when the boundary commission considered boundaries on the basis of the electorate in 1976 and the relevant constituencies did not come into force until seven years later, in 1983. So they were seven years out of date when the first election based on them was fought. The 1976 electorate was in turn based on registration in October 1975. We need to shorten the period between the start of the process and the making of the boundary commission's report. That would deal with many of the Minister's objections.

There is much to be said for dealing with each country as a single unit in boundary reviews. There is a danger in picking and choosing, selecting parts of the country which may be advantageous. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that a Conservative Home Secretary would consider it right to review the parts of the country that he thought could disadvantage his oppenents, leaving alone the areas where he considered his strength lay. There is some suggestion that that is precisely what the Secretary of State for the Environment is up to.

Whatever advice the Minister receives, I hope that he will reconsider the possibility of amending the Bill. A period of eight years represents a problem even worse than might be supposed, because half way through a second Parliament a Member might have to transfer his attention to constituents he hoped to have and away from those he already had. It is already not uncommon for Members to start canvassing people whom they know will enter their constituency, in anticipation of a review——

**Mr. Lloyd** *rose——*

**Mr. Darling:** I am about to say something that may stop the Minister wanting to intervene. These matters have been canvassed at some length. I readily accept that this was a probing amendment, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw it.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

## Clause 3

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN REPORTS

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I beg to move amendment No. 10, in page 2, line 17, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'subsections'.

**The Chairman:** With this we may also take the following: Amendment No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 29 to 31.

Government amendment No. 11.

Amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 31, at end insert

'provided that such boundaries are specified in any Act passed on or before that date whether or not that Act (or any part of it) is in force on that date'.

Amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 31, at end insert

'provided that the Boundary Commission may not publish recommendations which take account both of boundaries which are in operation and of boundaries which are not in operation at the time of publication'.

Amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 38, leave out

'the Boundary Commission for Wales"

and insert 'a Boundary Commission'.

Government amendments Nos. 12 and 13.

**Mr. Lloyd:** You kindly said, Mr. Morris, that I might discuss in more detail the answer to the question asked me by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on an earlier group of amendments. His question concerned the possibility of partial reviews of parts of the United Kingdom. I was about to intervene at the end of his speech, but I rise now to clear up the matter.

The 1986 Act, of which I am sure everyone has a copy, states in section 3(1):

"Each Boundary Commission . . . shall, in accordance with subsection (2) below, submit to the Secretary of State reports with respect to the whole of that part of the United Kingdom"—

in other words, to the whole of England, the whole of Wales, the whole of Scotland, or the whole of Northern Ireland, Subsection (2) in turn states:

"Reports under subsection (1) above shall be submitted by a Boundary Commission not less than 10 or more than 15 years from the date of the submission of their last report under that subsection."

Taking the two elements together, it is clear that the boundary commission for each part of the United Kingdom must submit reports to the Secretary of State within the 10 to 15 year window, and those reports must relate to the whole of its part of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Darling:** I do not want to labour the point, but the Act does not speak of submitting a report to the Secretary of State. It speaks of "reports"—in the plural—which implies that it would be open to a commission to produce several reports on a part of the United Kingdom. The only qualification in subsection (2) regards the period in which the commission must submit the reports. This Act was considered by the House in 1986, within recent memory, and there must have been some reason for the use of the plural.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I do not remember attending the debate, and if I did, I did not pay close attention. The Act is grammatically correct. The boundary commission remains in existence and is on its fourth review, so "reports" refer to there being at least one report every 10 to 15 years. That is the reason; it has nothing to do with breaking up the reports into sections dealing with parts of one of the nations that make up the United Kingdom.

If the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central wants to say more about this later or to see me privately I am willing to talk to him.

The hon. Gentleman said on Second Reading that he and his colleagues would table amendments to clause 3, and so they have. I said then that I thought the Opposition might be interpreting the effect of clause 3 too widely and I undertook to look again at its wording to check its clarity and scope. I have done that in the amendments standing in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who has arrived at the magic moment. They are designed to show more clearly and to obtain with greater precision what was intended in the original wording.

I hope that I can speedily pass over amendments Nos. 10 and 12 which are technical and consequential to

Government amendments Nos. 11 and 13. I hope that Government amendment No. 11 makes it clear that the parliamentary boundary commission may take into account in its provisional recommendations only the boundaries currently in force or prospective new boundaries—save in one instance which I shall come to later—which have already been specified in an Act, a statutory instrument, a statutory rule or measure of a Northern Ireland Assembly, but are not yet in force.

There is thus no question of pre-empting Parliament, the local government boundary commissions or the Local Government Commission. The provision is intended to give the boundary commission a degree of flexibility that will enable it to produce, conveniently for itself and everyone else, the most up-to-date boundaries. With reviews of local government boundaries around the country at different stages at any one time, it is sensible to let the boundary commission make its provisional recommendations with such prospective changes in mind.

The parliamentary boundary commission makes a series of provisional county recommendations over a number of years. It must then bring them together to make a single final recommendation to the Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Scotland or to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in which it must have regard to the appropriate boundaries in force on 1 June 1994.

In 1992 and 1993, it would surely be unreasonable to prevent the boundary commission from taking into account, in its provisional recommendations, boundaries which it knew that Parliament had approved for 1 April 1993 or 1 April 1994. It would mean that it would have to present revised proposals later, which would increase its work. It would also oblige those making representations upon it to do so in terms of boundaries which those petitioners knew were about to be superseded. That would happen if our amendment were not accepted, and it would certainly be so if the House were to accept amendment No. 3, which was tabled by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central and his colleagues.

8 pm

By contrast, amendment No. 4, also tabled by the hon. Member and his colleagues, would achieve a similar effect to Government amendment No. 11, except that it would confine flexibility to boundaries that are adjusted by Act of Parliament only, and not by statutory instrument, which is the normal procedure in England. For that reason, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will drop amendment No. 4 and accept that Government amendment No. 11 would achieve more completely what I believe that he intends to achieve with amendment No. 4. I also hope that he decides that my clarification meets the worries that persuaded him to table amendment No. 9 and that he will accept that, during the course of the general review, it will certainly be possible and right to have some provisional recommendations made on boundaries that are in force at the time and on some that will be prospective. It would cause great difficulty if that were not to be the case.

Of course, the final proposals must relate to boundaries that are in force, except in the one instance to which I alluded in clause 3(3). The special exception in that subsection relates specifically to Wales because the review of local government structure in Wales is well advanced. Proposals were set out in a consultative document issued in the spring of last year, and a White Paper is due this autumn, with the intended changes recommended therein coming to Parliament in a Bill which should be on the statute book before June 1994. It would obviously be of great convenience to the Welsh boundary commission, to Welsh local government and to the electors of Wales if the parliamentary boundary commission were obliged to have regard to the boundaries in that Act even though they were not yet in force. If that were not permissible there must, at the very least, be an interim review and there could be local and parliamentary elections with the boundaries of constituencies of local authorities not matching as well as they might before such a review took place. For that reason, clause 3(3) makes an exception of Wales and requires the Welsh boundary commission to have regard to boundaries incorporated in an Act on the statute book by 1 June 1994, but not yet in force.

Amendment No. 13 adds to that by making it clear that, in any provisional recommendations that the Welsh boundary commission may make, it is able to take account of any new boundaries included in a Bill that has had a Second Reading in the House. Of course, there is an element of risk. If the Bill does not go through the House or become an Act by 1 June 1994, the boundary commission for Wales would have to revise its proposals to accommodate them to the boundaries then in force rather than to those that are intended. As I said, there is a risk either way. However, Wales is sufficiently far down the track of reform for the risk of not taking into account the changes made in a Bill that has received a Second Reading and of having therefore to revise proposals in the second half of 1994 to be substantially greater than taking them into account and then having to backtrack because the Bill has missed the deadline and failed to become an Act by 1 June 1994.

I have some sympathy with amendment No. 7, which makes the exception apply throughout the United Kingdom, but, on the argument of balance of risk, I advise the Committee to reject it. Proposals for structural reform are nowhere else as far advanced as they are in Wales. In England, a rolling programme will be put into effect by statutory instrument and not by Act of Parliament. In Scotland, the Government are proposing a further consultation stage. What is helpful for Wales and would reduce uncertainty there would import unwelcome uncertainty elsewhere in the United Kingdom, where local government structural reform is less well advanced.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I understand the Minister's reasoning in respect of Wales. However, is not the consequence for Scotland of his not accepting amendment No. 7 a serious alteration in the balance of criteria, which will be considered by the boundary commission for Scotland if the Bill is enacted? As the law stands, under the 1986 Act, the boundary commission is required to give greater weight to local government boundaries in Scotland than it is in other parts of the United Kingdom. If the boundaries to be considered in Scotland are not up to date—that is what the Minister appears to be saying—we will find that the boundary commission in Scotland will give greater weight to other criteria. Therefore, it will alter the balance of substantive law and not simply accelerate the process.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The parliamentary boundary commission in Scotland will have to take into account the boundaries that are operational on 1 June 1994. The local government boundary reviews for Scotland are on track to be in place well before that date. Therefore, the normal local

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

government boundary review will inform the final report of the parliamentary boundary commission in Scotland. It is possible that two issues are being confused. The structural review and possible change of local government in Scotland, on which a first consultation paper has been issued and for which another is due, is a separate matter.

It would be difficult for boundary commissions in places where the proposals for the structural reform of local government are not so well advanced as they are in Wales to assess, until the last minute, what proposals they would take into account. They would be far less certain as to what those proposals would be until the final stage and they would not be sure that they would be on the statute book by 1 June 1994.

As I said, there is a risk for Wales, but there is a far greater risk for other areas of the United Kingdom. What is helpful for Wales, in which structural reform is far advanced, would be unhelpful for other parts of the United Kingdom and, certainly, for the boundary commission, which would have to judge whether the proposals that had been mooted were likely to get on to the statute book. It would then have to decide whether to keep its review going until close to the deadline at the end of 1994 or whether it should properly ignore the proposals because it felt that they would not come into force. The most sensible and helpful thing is to say to the rest of the United Kingdom that the boundaries will be in place and operational by June 1994 with the exception of those in Wales, quite simply because the process is further advanced there. I am talking about the review of local government structure, not the normal local government boundary commissions, which will make their conclusions well in time to enable the parliamentary boundary commissions in all parts of the United Kingdom to take them into account before that cut-off date of 1 June 1994.

**Mr. Darling:** Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the local government review structure in Scotland is likely to be in place by 1 June 1994?

**Mr. Lloyd:** No, I am saying that it may well not be. Unlike Wales, it is not so far advanced. As I understand it, a consultation document was issued last year and another is due out later this year but in Wales what is now due is the White Paper following the period of consultation, which has now ended. Therefore, it is possible to write into the Bill that which enables the Welsh boundary commission, without much risk, to take the conclusions into account. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom, with structural reform of local government in England and Scotland not so far down the track, there could be an uncertainty that would be extremely awkward for the boundary commissions to manage.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I thank the Minister for giving way again. Does he recognise that the consequence of the policy behind what he has just said is that for Scottish parliamentary constituencies, following the next report of the boundary commission and the proposed restructuring of Scottish local government, which is apparently to be subsequent to it, there will be a departure from the rubric of the 1986 Act, which is that the boundary commission shall have regard to the local government boundaries. As a result of this process of acceleration, in Scotland, local government boundaries and parliamentary boundaries will not coincide.

**Mr. Lloyd:** It is the exception for Wales that is out of line with previous practice. The actual boundaries operational in 1994 will be those that, in Scotland and England, must be taken into account by the parliamentary boundary commissions when making their proposals. There will be no discrepancy. If, afterwards, there is an Act of parliamentary measure in England that changes the structure of local government, there would then have to be, as there is when local government boundaries are changed, an interim review by the parliamentary boundary commission. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to suggest that what the Bill proposes would put local authorities out of line with the boundaries proposed by the Scottish parliamentary boundary commission.

The requirement of the 1986 Act, which applies to Scotland as well as to the rest of the United Kingdom, is that the commission must take account of the boundaries. It has traditionally been the boundaries that exist. For the convenience of Wales, which is so far advanced, an exception is being made to allow the boundary commission to take into account that which is encapsulated within an Act of Parliament that is due to come into force. It is possible to do this for Wales because it is sufficiently far advanced for there to be a reasonable certainty that that Act will be available in time to be taken conveniently into account. In Scotland and England that is more problematical.

**Mr. Maclennan:** There is not a factual misunderstanding between us. It is a question of judgment as to whether it is appropriate that the boundary commission for Scotland should be basing its accelerated work under the provisions of the Bill on boundary commissions for local government that will be rendered historical by the Government's future restructuring of local government. The practical consequences of that will be that the parliamentary boundaries will not, for the duration of the period that follows the report and the implementation of the boundary commission's recommendations, coincide with local government boundaries in Scotland, whatever may be the position in Wales.

**Mr. Lloyd:** They will be when the parliamentary boundary commission reports. I believe that the local government boundary commission for Scotland is due to report later this year, so there will be a connection between the local government boundaries and the proposals for the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies in Scotland. It may be that measures passing through the House a year, two or three years afterwards will alter local government boundaries in Scotland but it is up to the House, at a future date, to decide on proposals that have not yet been made. If that change comes about, the normal operation will happen, and there will be an interim review to adjust parliamentary and local government boundaries as has been done before. That is the fairest, most open and most convenient way to proceed.

8.15 pm

**Mr. Darling:** As the Minister said at the outset, we tabled amendments to qualify clause 3 because we had reservations about it. I am glad that the Minister has also tabled amendments, which have met some if not all of our objections.

Our amendment No. 3 would have the effect of removing the provision allowing the boundary commission to choose to base its recommendations on boundaries that did not exist nor were in operation. Amendment No. 4 presents the alternative approach of qualifying the clause so as to ensure that the boundary commission could consider only those boundary changes that were enshrined in an Act. I take the Minister's point that amendment No. 11 goes much wider than that, and has met the point of amendment No. 4. Perhaps I should say for the benefit of those who read reports of our proceedings that I welcome Government amendments Nos. 10 and 11, although, for technical reasons and so as to deal with other points in the group of amendments, we may have to divide the Committee against them. The amendments that the Government have tabled will improve clause 3.

The Minister has distinguished between the work of the local authority boundary commission and local government structure. He is right to do so in part, except that, once Parliament has determined the local authority structure, it will be necessary for the local authority boundary commissions to redistribute boundaries within those structures. There comes a point, if Parliament has decided what is to be encompassed within a county or a region, at which that may have an influence on the shape of a constituency or constituencies that the parliamentary boundary commission is considering.

I make that point because, in England, where the local authority structure is being dealt with in groups—or tranches, as the Secretary of State for the Environment calls them—there will be a point at which those boundaries will have a bearing on constituencies. I am sure that the Government know that full well, and that is why the Secretary of State for the Environment picked the groups that he did. They do not seem to be to go naturally together. He said in his statement that he had picked them partly because of their proven unpopularity, which is another way of saying because they consistently returned councils of a political complexion different from the Government and for that reason he wished Sir John Banham to get to grips with them at an earlier stage than the councils which have followed the Government's instructions over the past few years and which are to be left until later on.

It would be out of order for me to canvass the Secretary of State's views on these matters—we can only guess what he had in mind. However, we can have a pretty good guess knowing this Government and knowing that they would not have introduced the Bill at all had they not smelt political advantage. One can have a pretty good guess that the intention is to benefit the Government by nodding and winking to the boundary commission, or nudging it in the right direction.

I am sure that clause 3 has been framed so as to allow the commission to pick and choose—in other words, to take account of new boundaries in some areas and old boundaries in others. Amendment No. 9 would deal with that. Had the clause been allowed to pass unchallenged, the commission could have had regard to new boundaries that did not exist in the sense that they did not appear in any Act or other measure and were simply twinkles in Sir John Banham's eye, or perhaps the Government's eye. That would have been most unfortunate and an extremely bad precedent. Government amendment No. 11 has qualified the matter.

In England, five groups or tranches of counties are being examined. The Minister heard the debate that began this afternoon's proceedings, which focused on clause 2 and registration, and will realise that the counties that are examined in England will be crucial in determining the commission's work. It is not so much registration of timing that will have an impact on the political complexion of constituencies but the boundaries that the commission uses. That is why boundaries are so important, and that is one reason why the Secretary of State for the Environment has dealt with these matters in such an odd way. It is also the reason why the Government introduced clause 3. There is an awareness that opportunities may arise that will allow the commission, while following impartially the guidelines, to make recommendations that the Government think might favour them.

I remember in "Yes, Minister" instructions being given to impartial bodies. It was said by Sir Humphrey that all that was necessary to remain impartial was for the Government to lay down the railway lines and to put the railway engine at one end of the system, and the engine would end up precisely where the Government wanted. At the same time the Government would be completely impartial, having had no regard to any political considerations. Clause 3 smacks of that practice. That is why we have sought to qualify it—successfully, I think —by ensuring that the commission can take account only of those matters that Parliament has already approved. We wish also to ensure that there can be no picking and choosing within any one area.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** That is what the Bill would do with the amendments that I have proposed. With the exception of Wales, the final report of the commissions to the Secretaries of State can take into account only boundaries that are operational. In provisional reports they may take into account boundaries which are not operational but which have been included in legislation or which have passed through the House of Commons in the form of a statutory instrument. Therefore, the commission cannot pick or choose, and the Government cannot direct it to do so. It is clear that the commission can use only boundaries that are operational by the cut-off date, which is June 1994. There is no choice for either the commission or the Government.

**Mr. Darling:** That is precisely the point. If we take the first tranche of counties that are being considered by the Banham report, we understand from the statement made on 3 June 1992 that it is hoped that the first report will be in place by 1 June 1994. Students of boundary commission procedures know that Avon, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Cleveland, Durham, Derbyshire, Humberside, Lincolnshire, north Yorkshire and the Isle of Wight are all likely to feature in the review because they raise interesting propositions. If 1 June 1994 is the cut-off date, the Government know that the recommendations that relate to that group of counties will be enacted in some form even if they are not in operation. That causes us some concern.

*[Mr. Darling]*

If amendment No. 9 is not accepted—this goes to picking and choosing—there is a possibility that the commission, in any one of its reports, will pick boundaries that existed, or exist at present, as well as those that are likely to exist, or will exist because of legislation that has been passed but is not in operation. If I am wrong about that, it will not be necessary to proceed with the amendment. It seems, however, that it might be open to the commission to do that—to pick and choose—in its report. England will be dealt with in local government terms in five separate local government reports, which means that it might be possible for the commission to pick and choose, especially at points where a new set of boundaries cross or converge upon an existing set of boundaries.

It is interesting that the Government have tabled an amendment that tends to suggest that their timetable has slipped. Perhaps we have a rare insight into the way that the Government's business managers operate. It seems that they take the view that only the Second Reading of the proposals for Wales is under way. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) wishes to speak about that and the Welsh interest generally. Clause 3(3) seems to have much to commend it when we consider Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom, and our proposals would have had the same effect.

The logic that suggests to the Government that subsection (3) has merit applies also to Scotland's position. I appreciate that Wales is ahead of Scotland in these terms. Indeed, it could be said that in Scotland these matters are not even off the ground yet. The Government decided in the best tradition of government that something had to be done. To their surprise, they discovered that many who they thought were opposed to the present structure were prepared to say that there was something to commend it. Alternatively, there were those who said there was much to be said for not dismantling it merely for the sake of change. I am one of those who take the view that there might be something to be said for local government reform in Scotland, but experience tells me that any change is costly and disruptive.

Our regional system of government gives us 12 directorates in different areas. To create 20 or 30 local authority structures suggests that there will be a degree of replication. Be that as it may, in Scotland, as in other parts of the United Kingdom, the local authority structure and local authority boundaries, which are the building blocks for the Scottish boundary commission, are related. If there are to be major structural changes, it follows that there will be major changes to local authority boundaries, which in turn will affect the parliamentary constituencies.

It could be that the position in Scotland is such that there would be no chance of changing anything within the country. The Government have realised that the next review might come and go before there is anything to show in Scotland. It could be that that is why no attempt has been made to qualify the position in Scotland.

The approach that the Government have taken to Wales has something to commend it when we consider Scotland. First, if there are to be no local government structural changes in Scotland, we should be told. Secondly, the parliamentary constituencies should relate to the present structure. It is a shame that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), appears to be in the Chamber to take notes rather than to speak. Perhaps he could throw some light on the remarks of the Minister of State, Home Office. I remember that in a previous incarnation the Minister of State was challenged to name any one of Scotland's regions and failed to do so.

**Mr. Maxton:** The worst feature of the Scottish local government review is that, unlike the English review, it will be done entirely at the whim of Ministers. That is the worst possible thing for Scottish local government.

8.30 pm

**Mr. Darling:** Government whims have a great deal to do with all local government reform. All Governments tend to implement changes that benefit their political party, and that is regrettable. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), has been running up and down Scotland promising every village and parish that it will get its own local government structure if that is what it wants—and especially if it creates a little blue enclave in parts of Scotland. It would be unfortunate if our parliamentary boundaries were based on the same pieeemeal and ill-thought-out approach. However, nothing in the Scottish Office surprises us. Part of the Tory revival in Scotland happened because of boundary changes. I certainly cannot think of any other way that the Government can make substantial progress in Scotland.

As I said, there is an important point in clause 3 because local authority boundaries are the cornerstone of parliamentary boundary reviews. Therefore, what happened to the structure of local authority boundaries is crucial. Another important point is the question of local links, where usually local authority boundaries and divisions are taken into account. However, last time around in my constituency, the residents' parking areas were considered to be of paramount importance. It is the first time that I have known community ties to be circumscribed with yellow lines, whether double or single.

I welcome the fact that the Government have qualified clause 3, although there are other aspects of it that cause us great concern, not least our suspicion that the Government hope to take the opportunity to lay down track lines for the boundary commission to run along, which will be to the Government's political advantage. We remain deeply sceptical about clause 3, but we look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Listening to the debate, I was struck by what heavy weather the Opposition have been making of the Government's sensible amendment and the original proposals. Any proposals from a parliamentary boundary commission must, of necessity, be introduced throughout the country at the same time. If local government boundaries are not to be introduced at the same time, it is right that there should be a cut-off point —the point at which a snapshot is taken and from which the parliamentary boundary commission can work. There is nothing new in that. In the reorganisation of the early 1970s, it was common for local government boundaries to be changed in different parts of the country in response to

local circumstances. The parliamentary boundary commission never found it difficult to take into account those that had already reached the statute book and to ignore those still in the pipeline.

I see some Labour Members here who represent areas where there were changes during that time. I shall give the example of the city of Northampton. A moment ago, Mr. Lofthouse, your colleague in arms, Mr. Morris, was in the Chair. He came to the House to represent the constituency of Northampton, South when the parliamentary boundary commission created two seats out of the expanded county borough of Northampton. A number of villages on the outskirts were taken into the county borough, which affected the way in which parliamentary constituency boundaries were later drawn. However, that change did not happen within an overall restructuring of local government; it was an extension of the county borough of Northampton.

Sometimes, a local government structure was completely changed. I recall the creation of the county borough of Teesside in the late 1960s. It comprised part of the old county of Durham—the Stockton-on-Tees area—and part of the north Yorkshire area around Middlesbrough and out to Redcar and the county borough of Middlesbrough itself. In a sense, that was done on an ad hoc basis, because the creation of that county borough was not part of any overall restructuring of local government—it was the response of the local government boundary commission to the individual circumstances of the area. In due course, the parliamentary constituencies were realigned so that they followed the county borough boundaries.

Sometimes, such individual consideration makes precious little difference to the numbers involved. In my constituency some time ago, 60 electors in the Little Heath area of the parish of Potten End were transferred from the parish of Northchurch. The parliamentary boundaries were realigned, as is possible under the present arrangements, without waiting for the boundary commission's full report. Surely no Labour Member could dispute the fact that if the discrepancies between new local authority areas are minor and involve only a few hundred or a few thousand people, there is a perfectly adequate method for bringing those into line later.

**Mr. Maxton:** That has happened in my area and it is a double process: first, there is the local government change of moving a piece of land from one district council to another; then the parliamentary seats are reorganised. However, to do that in Scotland without an independent commission and without any idea of what the reforms will be is quite ludicrous. I recall that the hon. Gentleman served on the Committee that set up the English local government reform. He promised me that if there were not an independent commission in Scotland, he would raise objections with his Ministers.

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman's recollection is a little different from mine, but he was correct to say that minor changes occur in Scotland just as they occur in England and Wales—and I suppose, although I do not know, in Northern Ireland. I assume that hon. Members are concerned that changes in the pattern of local government will lead to major differences between the building blocks currently used to make up constituencies. That is why I said that such changes were a common feature of parliamentary redistributions in the 1950s and 1960s—a period when there was a rolling rather than a total programme of local government reform.

Many people found themselves in one local authority area but excluded from the parliamentary constituency because the realignment had not happened. That was quite common with the county boroughs. In those days, it was a rule of thumb of the parliamentary boundary commission that where a county borough was involved, it did not cross its border into the neighbouring county. Of course, there were exceptions to that rule. In recent years, the town of Reading has always had some of its wards outside the Reading constituency. Now, some rural wards are included in it.

In its practical operation, the boundary commission must have regard to changes in local government boundaries that have already come into operation. That is why my hon. Friend the Minister is right to draw the line in the Bill and to say that any changes must have gone through the House and have statutory backing, whether or not those authorities have appointed their new chief executives or held their elections.

The Labour amendment has two disadvantages: first, there would be guesswork about what might happen to local government: and, secondly, the whole process might be delayed to ensure that everything came into line. That could lead to all kinds of injustices. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) was present when I spoke on Second Reading, when I illustrated the system's unfairness by referring to the city of Glasgow, which is over-represented in United Kingdom terms and even in Scottish terms. It would be wrong for people to have a vote that was worth less in an expanding area such as Grampian than in a declining area such as the city of Glasgow. Judging from the remarks of other Labour Members on Second Reading, the view that injustices must be rectified is widely held among Opposition Members.

There can be no question of the Opposition arguing that redistribution in Scotland should be delayed until after local government reorganisation has taken place.

**Mr. Maxton:** The danger is that the boundary commission will do its work and devise draft constituencies prior to final local government reform and that those boundaries, drawn up for parliamentary purposes, would affect local government reorganisation. That could occur if certain things happened around the periphery of Glasgow—if, for example, one parliamentary seat encompassed parts of Glasgow, whereas other parts currently within Glasgow went outside the city's boundaries. The temptation would be to include in the new local government area that part of Glasgow that fell into the parliamentary constituency, even if that were against the wishes of local people.

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman is being highly suppositious.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman spell that?

**Mr. Jones:** I could certainly spell it for the benefit of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) —although I see that you, Mr. Lofthouse, are aware of the spelling.

*[Mr. Jones]*

The hon. Member for Cathcart is concerned not about the work of the parliamentary boundary commission but about Scottish local government reorganisation. That argument will stand or fall on its own merits. In due course, at the next redistribution, the commission will adjust the boundaries so that they came into line with the new local government units in Scotland.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** It will not be necessary to wait until the new round of parliamentary boundary commission reports. There will have to be an interim review—as there always is when local government changes that ought to be taken into account occur between boundary reviews.

**Mr. Jones:** I addressed that point earlier, when I said that minor discrepancies could be dealt with by an interim review without difficulty. It would not be so easy to deal with major discrepancies.

When local government was reorganised in 1973-74, a large number of constituencies found that parts of their area fell in one county or another, crossed districts or crossed regional boundaries in Scotland. The practice was to leave such discrepancies alone until the next parliamentary redistribution. A perfectly adequate mechanism exists for adjusting parliamentary boundaries to deal with minor discrepancies. Major discrepancies would have to wait for—and would certainly influence —the next round.

The situation in Wales is different, because it is much further down the line. Where the boundary commission can reasonably expect progress before it has to report, it ought to draw boundaries on that basis. That is happening with the English redistribution at this very moment. Work has started on those counties whose external boundaries have, under the present local government system, already been fixed. The commission is coming to the end of its work in those counties where the local government boundary commission has not yet finished its work.

I represent a Hertfordshire constituency that is right at the end of the line in terms of the boundary commission, because there is uncertainty about the boundary between Hertfordshire and Greater London. Although only a few thousand electors will be affected, the commission—perfectly reasonably—thought fit to wait until that matter is resolved, if that can be done in time, before specifying the internal boundaries.

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** Is there not a fundamental difference between boundaries in England which have been fixed and agreed and those in Wales which are no more than Government proposals, and which may have been agreed on Second Reading? What is the hon. Gentleman's view of the constitutional propriety of proceeding with that which is no more than the first stage of the passage of legislation through the House?

8.45 pm

**Mr. Jones:** The situation is the same as with a proposed statutory instrument for altering the boundaries of an English county, when the boundary commission might say, "We know that this work is proceeding and will wait until the boundaries are specified before we produce our proposals for that particular area." I see no difference between that and the Welsh situation.

The snapshot approach is the right one. It allows boundary changes to be taken into account as and when they occur and of necessity it introduces a cut-off date; otherwise the entire process might be delayed. We all agree that should not happen because of the injustices that might arise. I commend the Government's proposals and the amendment to the Committee.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I want to comment on amendment No. 13 in view of the contributions made by Government Members who, on the tenuous basis that they have Welsh surnames, profess to have a degree of expertise in Welsh politics. The Secretary of State for Wales would have been wise to be present. As one can hold that office these days without representing a Welsh constituency, perhaps the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and the Minister of State, Home Office are vying for the job of the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman should take care.

I ask the Government to withdraw amendment No. 13 with the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). The amendment refers specifically to Wales, as the Minister made clear. It presumes on the existence of Sir Humphrey's railway track. It is constitutionally improper, presumptuous in regard to Parliament and foolish in common sense terms —and it is appropriately numbered.

The amendment's very existence shows that the Secretary of State for Wales has been denied time in this Session for a Bill to reorganise Welsh local government. The Minister of State said that the Bill was unlikely to be on the statute book until June 1994, which is a very different timetable from that given to us in Wales.

Amendment No. 13 seeks to add the words:

"a boundary which has not yet come into operation on a particular date and which, apart from this subsection, would not be regarded as prospective on that date shall be so regarded if it is specified in a Bill which, on or before that date, has been read a second time by the House of Commons".

The Bill says that parliamentary boundaries must take into account local government boundaries following local government reorganisation in Wales. That new local authority boundaries should be taken into account even if they have not yet been established is reasonable, provided that Parliament has spoken. The boundaries would be set out in an Act of Parliament and would receive Royal Assent. At that stage the future of local government would be clear.

The amendment introduces a much more outrageous proposition—that the boundaries contained in a Bill that has not reached the statute book should be taken into consideration. That is unreasonable, because Parliament would not have spoken—and the basis of reorganisation may change considerably.

On the last group of amendments, the Minister stressed that he was not presuming on decisions to be made subsequently by Parliament. When we consider the implications, it becomes clear that amendment No. 13 contains an outrageous proposition. It would lead to the deciding of constituency boundaries on the assumption that there would be no chnge in the forthcoming Bill to reorganise local government in Wales between Second Reading and Royal Assent.

That may be the Government's aspiration, but to assume that there will be no change shows contempt and disregard for the democratic processes of the House. It is a very uncertain basis for decision-making. It is possible,

for instance, that the Government will fall and the reorganisation Bill will never become law. In that event, if the amendment were passed, the details contained in a piece of failed legislation would have to be treated as though they reflected reality. That is manifest nonsense. It is also constitutionally improper and borders on the unconstitutional.

Such a proposal is presumptuous in terms of the procedures of the House. After Second Reading come the Committee and Report stages, Third Reading, all the stages in the House of Lords and consideration of Lords amendments. It is insulting to both Houses to assume that they will make not the slightest change in the boundaries during those stages.

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** Surely the proposal is not only presumptuous but arrogant. How can hon. Members be persuaded to sit on a Committee when they have been told in advance that the result will be the same whatever they say or do? Is that not a perfect example of the Government's arrogance in power?

**Mr. Michael:** Indeed it is. It may be the basis on which some Conservative Members sit on Committees; certainly, they seem at present to be remarkably silent on important issues contained in Bills.

**Mr. Maxton:** My hon. Friend has made a good point. During the passage of a Bill to reform local government in Scotland, introduced in 1972, major amendments relating to the structure of Scottish local government were accepted. The region of Fife was created from previous divisions; areas such as Eastwood, Bearsden, Bishopbriggs and Clydebank, which under the original proposals were to be part of Glasgow district council, were taken out of Glasgow and new district councils were formed. Surely we are entitled to expect the same consideration from any Government when a Bill of this nature is going through Parliament.

**Mr. Michael:** I entirely agree. Even in the Government's terms, Second Reading—the stage at which we are supposed to take account of the boundaries in this instance—relates only to the principle of a Bill, not to its detail. As my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) pointed out, it is arrogant of the Government to assume that no changes will be made.

The Minister said that Wales was further down the road of local government reorganisation than Scotland or England. I suspect that he has not seen the map published by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and the dotted lines all over it which indicate uncertainty about the boundaries and a willingness for considerable further discussion. The Minister is less well-informed about Wales than he usually manages to be. There has been no satisfactory discussion about the functions and powers of local authorities, for instance. To anyone who cares about local government—as my hon. Friends and I do—the whole position appears unclear and uncertain.

**Mr. Anderson:** The point was made earlier that at least a Scottish Office Minister was present, even if he was present only to take a note. Is it not rather puzzling that no Welsh Office Minister is present, even to take a note?

**Mr. Michael:** My hon. Friend's timing is impeccable. Welsh Members with an interest in the matter are present, including the shadow Secretary of State for Wales. It would have been a little more sensible, for the Minister's own sake, for a Welsh Office Minister to move the Government amendment. In defending the clause and other Government amendments, he has completely destroyed the case for amendment No. 13. He must have felt very embarrassed about having to move the amendment and to speak in terms that were clearly inconsistent with everything that he had said about other aspects of the clause. There must be opportunities to improve the legislation during its passage, possibly in an entirely non-partisan fashion. That is very important, when a measure as important as a Bill to reform local government in Wales is going through the House.

The amendment is a sign of the Government's desperation. In recent weeks, we have tried to persuade the Secretary of State for Wales to come clean about the timetable for the reorganisation of Welsh local government. It is not as clear and simple as the Minister suggested in his introduction. Questions have been answered with prevarication, or—in this afternoon's Welsh questions, for instance—with patronising knockabout. The amendment, however, tells us the truth. The fact is that the Cabinet and the Government's business managers have denied the Secretary of State for Wales time for his local government Bill. He originally promised us a White Paper in the autumn and legislation during the current Session. Tonight the Minister said clearly and without prevarication, as he confirmed our suspicion that such a timetable could not be met, that it was unlikely that the Welsh local government reorganisation Bill would be in place even as late as June 1994.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** If the hon. Gentleman consults *Hansard*—and if, as I believe, my memory of what I said is correct—he will find that I was talking about Scotland and explaining why the same arrangements could not be made in Scotland and in Wales. What I said about Wales—the hon. Gentleman repeated it tonight—was that it was well down the track and that a White Paper was projected for the autumn. When the measures will be presented in the form of a Bill and how, when or if it will be on the statute book will depend on decisions made by the House, but the opportunity will certainly come much earlier than in the case of Scotland. In deference to Scotland, and to ensure that all is understood and taken into account, a second round of consultation is planned by Scottish Office Ministers.

**Mr. Michael:** The Minister manages, with a straight face, to make a brave attempt to defend the indefensible. He did make the comments about Scotland to which he referred, but at a different point he justified Government amendment No. 13, on the ground that the Welsh legislation might well not be in place by June 1994. Were that not the case, there would be no justification for the amendment. The Minister is plainly very confused about the timetable for Wales.

The legislation has wider implications, with which we cannot deal tonight. Local government members and officers need to know where they are; they do not know where they are with the timetable in its current state. We need continuity and quality of services, but that will be put at risk by this kind of doubt. The Local Government Act 1972 requires elections in May 1993, and primary legislation is required to cancel or delay them. Clearly, legislation must at least be introduced before the summer

*[Mr. Michael]*

recess for a range of practical reasons, if those elections are not to go ahead next year. It would be greatly to the convenience of local authorities in Wales if the amendment were agreed to, says the Minister. It would be greatly to the convenience of everyone in Wales to know exactly what the Government are up to—when the local government measure is to be introduced and when the measure to delay or cancel the elections is to be introduced, if that is what is going to happen.

The democratic processes of selection, the fact that returning officers need to prepare for elections and the fact that members and officers need to plan ahead—all this is uncertain because of the timetable that has been let out of the bag today by the Minister. It must be very embarrassing for the Secretary of State for Wales to be in this position, but it is a major headache for many people and organisations throughout Wales, not least those engaged in local government.

The amendment seeks to cover up the embarrassment of the Secretary of State for Wales. That is no good reason for such an extraordinary piece of drafting which makes nonsense of and shows great disrespect for the parliamentary process. I invite the Minister to show respect for the House and to withdraw amendment No. 13.

9 pm

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** The Government have clearly run into a problem. The dilemma is that they want to press ahead as speedily as they can with boundary revisions because they have made a neat calculation that it would be in their interests to do so and to get the boundary changes in force by the time of the next election. They are not, however, in any way balancing that wish with an effort to ensure that the legislation is as accurate as possible. Their wish to expedite the process has run into difficulties. It conflicts with the fact that the local government boundary revision is taking place and that the building blocks upon which the commissioners will make up their minds are changing. The dilemma that faces the Government is that this is a moving target.

I shall speak briefly to amendment No. 13, since much of what I should otherwise have said has already been covered extremely well by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). The amendment tells us that the Government's timetable for Welsh local government reorganisation has slipped. The Government had thought that the Bill would have completed all its parliamentary stages by the time the boundary commissioners reached their conclusions. It also tells us something about the clout, or lack of it, of the Secretary of State in the Cabinet. The Welsh Office plea to have this matter expedited has obviously not been heard by the Secretary of State's Cabinet colleagues.

It is not unknown for local government and parliamentary boundaries to be different. It is a little inconvenient, but it is no great tragedy. In my county, West Glamorgan, the one seat of Gower straddles both the Lliw valley district council and Swansea city council. It is less convenient, but it happens. Any changes that may come into being as a result of the recommendations arising from local government reform can be taken into account, if they are not major recommendations, in interim reviews.

We are therefore bound to ask, why the hurry? Why expedite this in Wales? As amendment No. 13 suggests, a Second Reading debate should be taken as the starting point for the local government commissioners.

The Minister has said that there is an element of risk. I made the point in an intervention that the constitutional priority that the Government seem to be ready to overlook means that, in effect, the Government are saying that the local government commissioners can go ahead confidently on the basis that what the Government have proposed, by way of a Bill whose Second Reading has been agreed in principle, will be what will emerge at the end of the parliamentary process. There can be no other conclusion.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There can be another conclusion, if anybody with any common sense reads the Bill, as amended. The boundary commission for Wales can produce provisional recommendations based on that which is contained in the Second Reading debate. The real risk to which I referred is that there may be changes to the Bill as it goes through the House. The boundary commission for Wales would then have to revise its recommendations. Only the boundaries that are legislated for in the Bill when it has become an Act can be used as a basis for its final recommendations to the Secretary of State. They will form the boundaries of the new constituencies. That is exactly what the Bill says, with the amendments. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. That is because he has not followed the argument. I accept that it is difficult to follow a Bill and the amendments that have been made to it and to get both perfectly clear, but I suggest that if the hon. Gentleman looks quietly and carefully at the amendments he will find that what I have just said is correct.

**Mr. Anderson:** Despite all the Minister's talk of risk and comparative risk, his message to the commissioners is, "You can act on the supposition that what is contained in the Bill as agreed on Second Reading will be the ultimate result." That is the reason for the difference between Wales and England, but it is hardly an encouragement for hon. Members to serve on a Committee.

Recommendations on boundaries are questions of judgment and are not likely to be matters of partisan conflict. For example, Labour-controlled West Glamorgan county council is making its own recommendations, Labour-controlled Swansea city council is making other recommendations and Labour-controlled Lliw valley district council is making yet others. Port Talbot district council, which includes Aberavon, and Neath district council, which are both Labour controlled, are making other recommendations. Non-partisan judgment is being pre-empted by what the Government are suggesting.

It is unconstitutional to prepare on that basis—the arrogance of power, as I have called it. I argue that there is no great problem in Wales. We do not have great disparities in electorates, which may be a problem elsewhere, nor are there great movements of people as there are between the inner cities of London and other great cities and the suburbs. That is not a problem which might impel the Government to accept an argument for expediting consideration.

About 20 unitary authorities, rather less than the 38 seats in Wales, are likely to emerge from the Secretary of State's suggestion. On the basis of logic, therefore, it is

unlikely that there will be much overlap or difference between parliamentary constituencies and the lower number—almost half as many—of unitary authorities that will emerge.

Wales should be treated on a par with the rest of Britain. There is no great hurry in respect of Wales. Indeed, on the contrary, there should be time for reflection and for avoiding the unconstitutional haste that the Government are accepting in amendment No. 13.

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): I shall not detain the Committee long. A number of my colleagues have been slightly suspicious of the Government's timing. That being so, I must be deeply suspicious, because the Government have managed to get this group of amendments to coincide with a well-attended meeting—and not the first one, I might add—of my constituents who are deeply angry about the way in which the boundary commission is proposing to transfer them to Brent, another Labour-controlled authority.

I want to focus my comments briefly on the sense of community and the link between the Member of Parliament, the local authority and citizens in the area. That has been causing me some concern, because an increasing number of people have been saying to me that they feel that the sense of community has been overridden. I fear that the way in which the Government have approached the Bill, and indeed the timing of its Committee stage, suggests that they have given too little thought to the sense of community and all that goes with it.

The issue is fairly clear. I shall quote briefly from the Department of the Environment's guidelines to the Local Government Commission for England and shall urge the Government to take them on board in the longer-term changes that they are suggesting, which will not help with the link between Members and councils. The Department says:

"Local authorities should be based on communities. The Commission should assess the extent and strength of local people's loyalties and identities, and their interests. It will use its own judgment as to the best method for making this assessment, but should bear in mind that research has shown that people's sense of identity with the community is often intuitive."

That is an important and strong point, on which I agree 100 per cent. with the Department of the Environment.

The Department then says:

"The Commission should take account of people's expressed preferences . . . The Commission may also wish to use statistical information about the pattern of people's lives within the area under review. It may wish to look at patterns of employment, shopping and travel . . . The Commission should base its recommendations on communities . . . The Commission should take account of the strength of identity associated with each level of community."

In paragraph 11, the Department says:

"All functions"—

in a local authority—

"should be exercised in a way that is responsive to the needs and wishes of local people, and, particularly in the case of strategic functions, is in the wider public interest. The Commission should look at the exercise of functions from the point of view of the citizen, not the providing authority. It should look for a structure to achieve the most effective and convenient exercise of functions to fit in with community identities and which is in the interests of local people."

Complaints have been expressed strongly in the case of both the Edward Woods area which, it is proposed, should go to Kensington—that has not come about yet—and the College Park area, about which there is a meeting tonight in my constituency, which will go to Brent. The argument is neither about different services in different areas nor, I emphasise, about different political control. I do not take the view that one should never cross local borough boundaries in London because I believe that we are getting to the stage where that might be necessary. I hope I can take the Minister with me in saying that that should be a measure of last resort because the sense of community is more important. We should go for that in the first instance.

I bring to the Minister's attention what the boundary commission itself recommends. To return to the railway analogy, the issue goes off the rails at this point. If we continue down this road, we shall go off the rails with the identity of interest of Members of Parliament. The commission recommended that College Park should go to Brent despite the wishes of the community.

The commission says:

"Nearly all respondents claimed to identify strongly with Hammersmith and Fulham, and to have a few connections with areas north of the Harrow Road."

The commission gives examples of that. It then says:

"We acknowledge the strength of local residents' opposition to our draft proposal; approximately 50 per cent. of residents signed the petition opposing our draft proposal, and Hammersmith Council's survey apapeared to show a similarly high proportion of households to be against major change. We accepted that College Park was unusually self-contained for an inner London community, and that it could be said to have a distinct identity."

I emphasise that point to the Minister.

A number of hon. Members have referred this afternoon to the difference between inner-city areas and other areas in terms of the rapid turnover of population. There is a rapid turnover of population in areas such as mine. However, it is also true—we ignore this point at our peril—that a core component of the local community stay within the area for most of their lives. They have a history going back not just over one generation, but over many. To override them is not in the interests of good local government or in the interests of keeping well the link between the Member of Parliament and the constituency, unless we believe that it is desirable to cross borough boundaries when deciding the parliamentary constituency.

9.15 pm

It is interesting that the boundary commission justifies its actions by referring to simple geographical barriers, such as the Harrow road which is the main factor dividing College Park from Brent. The commission says that it is not of major importance and could be crossed.

The report continues:

"In reviewing our draft proposal, we were conscious of the points raised . . . in particular, we bore in mind that the wishes of the people are only one of the factors which we must consider."

I take issue with that. I accept that the wishes of the people are only one factor, but I do not accept that they are minor. The report continues:

"We acknowledged the strength of feeling expressed by the considerable number of College Park residents who made their views known to us, but we had also to consider the pattern of community life and the effective operation of local authority services."

I understand that there could be a cost factor if we were discussing the large constituency of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), but we are talking about transferring an area half a mile down the road, or perhaps a mile at most, from the rest of the constituency. I have run around the periphery of my

constituency several times and I can do it in about two hours, but that is not true of many constituencies. I do not want us to lose sight of the fact that communities matter, and I hope that the Government will not do so.

The report continues:

"Notwithstanding the views of local residents, we concluded that College Park has natural affinities with Brent."

The commission concludes that, but no one else does, and it continues:

"We realise that most local authorities are resourceful in overcoming problems",

and it states that it is perfectly possible to do so. It then refers to geographical divisions such as the Grand Union canal. Most of my constituents do not have to worry about crossing the canal because several bridges cross it, and it is therefore not difficult.

There is real anger about the College Park proposal. The last meeting to discuss the proposals before they became a recommendation was attended by between 150 and 200 of the 700 residents, and I am missing a meeting tonight. They were massively opposed and no one spoke in favour. I attended a similar meeting about the proposal for the Edward Woods estate and surrounding areas. Again, no one spoke in favour, and the other local authorities are not in favour.

What on earth are we doing considering amendments that the Government say must be made to ensure that the link between local authorities and the constituencies of Members of Parliament remains when all the evidence shows that the boundary commission is making decisions for geographical reasons rather than on the basis of the essence of community, which is what we should consider?

I accept that the commission should have the power to override arguments about political expediency. I want the boundary commission to be independent. If I thought that the Conservative party was fighting to get these parts of my constituency, I might be suspicious, but it is not. The proposal is apolitical in that respect.

Community and a sense of it should be our highest priority, especially in inner city areas where the community is already fractured. We fracture it further at our peril. If a community wants to stay in a local authority and a constituency, that wish should be given a high rating, and should be overruled only in exceptional circumstances, not as the norm.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I was alarmed to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) refer to running around his constituency. If I were to do the same, there would be a by-election before I had got 100 yards.

**Mr. Maxton:** What about swimming?

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I do not know how I would get on if I tried to swim to the Bass Rock. I think we will pass over that.

The Government have concocted a number of dog's breakfasts and the Bill is certainly one. I do not doubt that they will go ahead with it—they always do—but I shall make a few comments so that I shall be able to say, "I told you so."

**Mr. Maxton:** My hon. Friend has done that a few times too.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Yes, I have, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and especially on the subject of the poll tax.

I was intrigued to read reports in the Scottish press late last week that no less a person than Professor Ross Harper had been designated as the Conservative party action man on boundaries—a sort of gerrymandering officer. We shall be watching him. I hope that truly independent boundary commissioners will not let him get away with anything like that.

I recognise the importance of much of what my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said about strengthening community loyalties. The song in Musselburgh in my constituency is

"Musselburgh was a burgh when Edinburgh was nane, and Mussleburgh will be a burgh when Edinburgh's gane."

So if anyone suggests lumping Musselburgh with Edinburgh he will be in trouble.

I shall now speak to the amendment, Mr. Lofthouse. I have the honour to represent the constituency of East Lothian, which is happily coterminous with East Lothian district council. Since the last major local government review, everyone has known where the boundaries of East Lothian are. Indeed, no less a person than the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is a citizen of East Lothian. He should know all about East Lothian. Everyone knows where the boundaries are except the Post Office, which still uses the old county areas as postal addresses in some areas, just for the sake of confusion.

The boundaries are largely a straightforward matter. Everyone understands what the district is, who the Member of Parliament is, what the constituency is and what the local authority is. But it was not always thus. When I was first elected to Parliament in 1978 I was elected to the former constituency of Berwick and East Lothian. It was a truly historic constituency. It was first constituted in 1908 from two former counties. I make that point because it is relevant to the position that we are working ourselves into.

The former constituency of Berwick and East Lothian outlived the 1974 local government boundary review. So the constituency for which I was elected included parts of two regional council areas and no fewer than four district council areas. I had to deal with six local authorities, six chief executives, and six sets of local government officers. As other public authorities often conduct their administration on the basis of local authority areas, I also had to deal with two health boards, and two separate offices of the Department of Health and Social Security, the Department of Employment and so on.

The arrangement in my former constituency was fairly chaotic for my office but it was also confusing for many of my constituents. Ideally, indeed necessarily, local authority boundaries should be related to the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies. It is nonsense when the Government are embarking on a major review of the structure of local government in Scotland for them to move ahead of that to create new parliamentary constituencies. We shall go back to the same confusion into which I was elected with bits of local authority areas in old parliamentary constituencies. The Government tell us that they intend to make major changes to local authority areas.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should address his remarks to his hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who said that

he did not want any arrangements to be made for Wales that would bring the new local authorities in Wales in line with the new parliamentary constituencies as early as possible. The remarks of the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) are diametrically opposed to those which we heard a few minutes ago from the Opposition Front Bench in respect of Wales.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I cannot speak for Wales but I think my hon. Friend is about to.

**Mr. Michael:** I am happy to do so. The Minister makes another attempt to get himself out of the mess that he has dug himself into during the day. I am happy for the new local government boundaries in Wales to be taken into account as quickly as possible. Indeed, I made that clear in my speech. That is what the Bill would do as it was originally drafted. If the amendment were accepted things would not be done as quickly as possible. The commission would be instructed to run around doing things on the basis of speculation which would be disrespectful to the House and constitutionally dubious. I do not believe that there is any difference between my hon. Friend and me, however much the Minister suggests that there is.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I am relieved to hear that and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention.

I conclude my remarks because my message is straightforward and simple. There should be some sensible correlation between parliamentary and local authority boundaries.

The Government say that they will embark on a major restructuring of local government in Scotland. It is probably right that they should do so because the two-tier local government structure has not been a success. People do not understand it and it does not work well. There is certainly a case for a single tier local authority system and I should be inclined to support such a principle, although I am always deeply suspicious of the detail of schemes that the Government introduce.

Although the structure of local government in Scotland should be reviewed, it would be absurd to construct a whole new set of parliamentary boundaries in Scotland on the basis of existing local government boundaries if, just one or two years after that, a whole new network of local authority boundaries were superimposed on those new parliamentary constituency boundaries. I have suffered from that problem in the past and seen the confusion that it causes, not only for Members of Parliament but, more importantly, for the people whom we represent. It can give rise to chaos and I fear that the Government are drifting into that again. They should not do so.

**Mr. Barnes:** Government amendment No. 13 is a constitutional insult. The Government should not deal with the Bill as though it were an Act of Parliament. I do not know what precedents exist for that. I assume that they are bad precedents and I doubt whether many precedents deal with constitutional matters.

I wish to support amendment No. 3. A reform of local government boundaries should not take place alongside a reform of parliamentary boundaries because the parameters within which the commissioners are supposed to act, as provided in the Bill, place them in an invidious position. Considerations about changes in local government areas are affected by considerations for parliamentary boundaries, and vice-versa.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Having listened to the hon. Gentleman, I wonder which review he will cancel: the review of local government boundaries; the review of local government structure; or the parliamentary boundary commission review. If we cannot run any of those in parallel, something must give. Which one would the hon. Gentleman dispense with?

**Mr. Barnes:** I shall leave the problem of which problem to sort out first with the Minister. It would be possible to go ahead with parliamentary boundary reviews relating to existing local government structures while, at the same time, engaging in discussions about local government structures to come into place later. Obviously, the two will then be out of line but later, when a further parliamentary boundaries review takes place, the position will be adjusted according to local government boundaries. That is one way in which the problem could be tackled but one set of commissioners should not have to consult another set of commissioners about what is taking place.

**Mr. Lloyd:** They do not.

**Mr. Barnes:** Policy guidance documents issued by the Department of the Environment say that, for the purposes of local government boundaries reviews, a number of people must be consulted. Many of the areas in which interest should be taken are reasonable, and the document says that particular account should be taken of the views of Members of Parliament. But among the people to be consulted, the document also lists the parliamentary boundary commission. That shows at least one way round the problem—in altering local government boundaries, consultations must take place with the parliamentary boundary commission.

That seems to be fraught with danger, and nowhere more so than in Derbyshire. We have often heard Conservative Members refer to David Bookbinder as a demon. Now that he has been replaced as leader, presumably Martin Doughty's name will be used instead. Martin Doughty responded to the local government boundary changes suggested for Derbyshire, which is included in the first tranche of local government authorities. The alterations to Derbyshire's local government boundaries will be taken into account when considering parliamentary boundaries. Derbyshire is not down to be considered for early parliamentary boundary changes, and is likely to be in the last tranche to be reviewed, so new arrangements will have to be made.

On page 76 of *County News*, 14 June 1992, Martin Doughty states:

> "Eight of the ten authorities chosen for immediate scrutiny by the Government were either set up following the 1974 local government reorganisation, or border onto those councils.
>
> The exceptions are the Isle of Wight which has two small districts within the county boundary, and Derbyshire which at this stage seems to stand alone".

We are told that the Derbyshire review has to take place because of concern about the county and its boundaries. Those worries had been mainly expressed by Conservative Members from Derbyshire. Pressure has been applied by the politics of Conservatism in Derbyshire to ensure that that county is included in the first tranche. That should not be a reason for including Derbyshire in the review of local

*[Mr. Barnes]*

government at the initial stage when the parliamentary boundary review and consideration of parliamentary seats are included in the arrangements.

There is a considerable danger in a county such as Derbyshire being put forward for the local government review and the parliamentary boundary review. It may be that the parliamentary review will be limited to the current boundaries of Derbyshire and split that county into a number of regions, but it is possible for the local government commissioner to ask the Minister for other districts to be considered and added to the review. We would then have a problem, as some authorities in Derbyshire might begin to shrink, while others expanded. Even if that does not happen, we should not allow the Minister even to consider it. That should be set out clearly in legislation.

It should be clearly set out in legislation that boundaries constitute one parliamentary sphere and local authorities another, and the two should not be cross-referenced or alterations made to the political map that help certain groups close to the Government. The Minister should seriously consider amendment No. 3, which begins to resolve some of those problems. He should carefully respond, particularly in relation to whether clause 3 should stand part of the Bill.

**Mr. Maxton:** I shall try to keep my remarks brief—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should never tempt me into making long speeches—they might get one.

I apologise for missing the Minister's earlier remarks, but I want to speak entirely about Scotland this evening. Unlike in England and Wales, no independent commission is looking into local government reform and reorganisation in Scotland. That is entirely at the whim of Ministers, who make proposals and then push through legislation. That can never be right. Even at this late stage, an independent commission should be set up.

Let us examine the time scale for local government reform and its relationship to the parliamentary boundary commission. It appears that in September this year there will be a White Paper with Government proposals on Scottish local government. I am told that it will contain a series of proposals, offering choices and even various maps. We do not know if that is true, but certainly there will be no legislation this Session. It will be November 1993, the Queen's Speech, before we even know what the final proposals are. The legislation will then go through the House of Commons. The regional elections planned for May 1994 will be cancelled and the regions will be allowed to continue until the legislation becomes an Act and the new structure is put in place for May 1996. The boundary commission might therefore report in 1994 with no idea of what the new local government structure in Scotland will be. The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has come out with some very odd and vague ideas, concentrating on only one aspect—Eastwood district council should remain in existence and hell-mend the other authorities in Scotland. On the other hand, the commission might not do its job and might allow the local government boundary reforms to take place and then set up new parliamentry boundaries related to the new local government structure.

As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said, the latter is the best way of approaching the matter. It ensures the continuing links between Members of Parliament and local government areas, so that they will not find themselves representing various parts of various local authorities. Ideally, they will represent only one——

**Mr. Home Robertson:** Or two.

**Mr. Maxton:** Two would be fine, if there is a two-tier structure, but we should not have to represent a mass of local authorities.

Is it impossible for the boundary commission to wait for the new local government structure in Scotland to be in place? No. I accept that the boundary commission can only begin its work; it cannot finalise it on the basis of the first draft of the first Bill to come before the House, in November 1993. Presumably, that legislation will complete all its stages by June 1994. By then, it may have been changed and the commission will have to take account of the changes. Last time we effected a major local government reform in this place—not that I was here—the legislation was changed significantly as it went through this place and the other place.

In June 1994, the boundary commission would have to lay out its draft boundaries for the parliamentary seats in Scotland. There is nothing wrong with that. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with the final drafting and submissions not being ready until February or March 1995. After all, we have just had a general election, in April. This place works on a five-year lifespan. Therefore, at least constitutionally, the next general election will take place in April, or even May, 1997. That is when the parliamentary boundaries need to be in place unless we witness another occasion when a Prime Minister believes that he can rig the election by calling it when it suits his purpose rather than that of anyone else.

The fact is that, in constitutional theory, the next election will take place in April 1997. Why all the rush and hurry about getting the boundaries in place before then? Even if the Government decided on a four-year term rather than a five-year one, my time scale would still allow time for the boundaries to be in place by April 1996. We would then have the new parliamentary and local government boundaries in place at the same time. That is the sensible way forward and I hope that the Minister will take heed of it.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The different treatments given to Wales and Scotland by the Bill are understandable in view of the fact that the Secretary of State for Wales has made his intentions clear. However, it is unsatisfactory that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland sat through the debate and kept the intentions of the Scottish Office entirely covert.

The Bill would affect Scotland, England and Wales differently. It would be reasonable to expect the Under-Secretary to explain precisely how the Bill is intended to operate in Scotland. Under the 1986 Act, Scotland is not in the same position as England and Wales. Schedule 2(4) to the Act clearly sets out that Scotland is to be treated differently and that the boundary commission in Scotland is required to have regard to local government boundaries. If the Bill becomes law and the Government amendments are accepted, the boundary commission in Scotland will have no option but to act on existing local government boundaries and to produce a report which, if the Government's intentions as expressed by the Scottish

Office are clear, will be overtaken by structural changes as soon as they are implemented by the House. Therefore, Scottish local government and parliamentary boundaries, which should coincide or at least bear some relationship to each other, will probably be completely different. That is not satisfactory. It is up to the Under-Secretary to explain when he intends to bring forward the structural proposals for change so that we can consider them before the Bill leaves the House and assess whether a measure such as that proposed for Wales would be appropriate for Scotland. However, in Scotland, we have no proposals to consider.

Although the procedure for Wales is unusual, it relates to the facts as they were spelt out by the Ministers responsible for Wales. The proposal is understandable, if novel, but the great cloud of unknowing in respect of what will happen in Scotland is unacceptable. We do not know whether the work of the boundary commission in Scotland will be accelerated, which many people would accept, or whether the boundary commission's recommendations will diverge from any that may have to be considered later in this Parliament.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I have noted what most hon. Members have said. Some of their points have been lost in the obscurity of my handwriting, so I shall start with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). I should like him to confirm whether he made this following point, because it is less logical than most of his points. He appeared to want the boundary commission to ignore some changes that Parliament will have willed in local government boundaries and that will already be in operation when it makes its report. Is that so? The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I am glad that, at least to that extent, he agrees with the Government that, if there are local government changes in operation by the time that the parliamentary boundary commissions have to make their final report, they should take those into account in their reports.

The hon. Gentleman then queried the opportunities for provisional recommendations to be taken into account before the boundaries are in operation. That will be legitimate only—except in the case of Wales—if they have been legislated for. They will not be acceptable in any final report unless they are in operation. Throughout the debate, many hon. Members have talked as if the final report could be based on recommendations that appeared only in a Bill that had had Second Reading when it can only be for recommendations that have had statutory form through becoming an Act. If the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central wishes to intervene, I would be happy to give way to him.

9.45 pm

**Mr. Darling:** I bet the Minister would—it was painfully obvious that he was taken by surprise when he was called to speak. I will give him this opportunity to wake up. My point was that it is conceivable, especially in England because of the way in which the Government are going about local authority changes, that there could be areas in which there were new boundaries in operation, or at least enacted and capable of being in operation, and others where they were not. I was concerned that, in such an area, the boundary commission might make recommendations that were partly based on new boundaries and partly on old boundaries. I would not urge the boundary commission to ignore a new local authority area. However, I am concerned about the mixture.

**Mr. Lloyd:** With the rolling programme in which sectors of the country are taken as they will be in the local government review, that must inevitably be so if those reviews roll across the date of 1 June 1994, which is the cut-off point for the convenience of the boundary commission so that it knows what it has to take into account and what it does not have to take into account. If we accepted the hon. Gentleman's amendment, the boundary commission would be in great confusion as to what it should be taking into account. Inevitably there will be a mixture.

The hon. Gentleman also assumes that the revised local government structure will, somehow, produce more favourable circumstances, and therefore constituency changes, for the Conservative party than existing local government boundaries. I do not know how he can assert that, as he does not know what the local government commissions will be recommending. He cannot possibly make that prediction, and I suspect that he has no principled objection to the arrangements being made and does not know how they will end up but finds it a little easier to fill in his time by spraying around assertions that he cannot sustain.

Like others, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred to the timing of local government restructuring in Scotland. As I said earlier, the Secretary of State has said that there will be a further consultation stage in Scotland this autumn. This will probably give some idea of how the Government will implement their manifesto commitment. The Secretary of State has not given any idea of timing. The current thinking is that there will be a Bill in the 1993-94 Session and that Royal Assent may be given in the summer of 1994. Elections for the new authorities could take place in the spring of 1995, with the new authorities coming into effect in April 1996—well after the parliamentary boundary commission will have been obliged to report.

**Mr. Maxton:** Did the hon. Gentleman say that there could be elections in 1995? The legislation is unlikely to be through this place much before October or November of 1994.

**Mr. Lloyd:** There may be a need to elect a shadow authority to take over from the existing authority for a period. If the new structure comes into effect in 1996, which is quite possible, I think that even the hon. Gentleman would accept that that will be well after the commission has to report. It would be extremely difficult for the commission to take the new local government boundaries into account two years after it had to report.

**Mr. Maxton:** Is the Minister confirming that the regional elections of May 1994 will be cancelled? That would appear to be the implication of what he is saying.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The hon. Gentleman may draw what inferences he thinks logical from what I say. These are matters for the Secretary of State for Scotland and I shall not trespass too far on matters that he will be making clearer in his consultation document later this year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), in an interesting and well-informed speech, rightly said that local government boundaries need to be

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

known before they can be taken into account by boundary commissions. That is the basic common sense that underlies this measure, but it was not adopted by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). The hon. Gentleman invited me to withdraw amendment No. 13, which he described as improper and presumptuous. In fact, it is entirely sensible and practicable.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth professed to be outraged. That was either because he had not followed the debate—he certainly had not followed clearly what is in the Bill or in the amendments—or, more likely, because he felt that he needed to generate some strong emotion to compensate for the lethargic Opposition Members sitting behind him, as well as empty Benches, while he was speaking.

There is no question of the Government taking Parliament for granted. I believe that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth was wheeled on to make the bluster that I have described. He will know that the plan is that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will produce a White Paper in the autumn, which will set out the reform that is planned and the timetable.

**Mr. Michael:** If there was a need to wake anyone, it was the Minister. Very few Conservative Members were sitting behind him whereas the Opposition had the presence of the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). My hon. Friends on the Opposition Back Benches have given their Front-Bench colleagues lively support. The Minister has suggested that we are divided against one another when we are not. The reality is that he is divided against himself on amendment No. 13. We say that the Bill should not proceed on the detail of a piece of proposed legislation that has not passed through the House. We certainly should not ask the Boundary Commission for Wales to do so. It is as simple as that. The Minister seems not to understand that.

**Mr. Lloyd:** When the hon. Gentleman was speaking I could see behind him rather better than he could. I shall return to the argument that he has reiterated when I direct my remarks to the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), who made the same point. He, too, let his imagination run riot while his common sense took a back seat.

The only assumption that lies behind the Bill is that the Government will introduce a Welsh local government Bill sufficiently early for Parliament to determine its fate well before the Boundary Commission for Wales has prepared its final recommendations, which must depend on what an Act states rather than on what is contained in the Bill. If changes are made to the Bill, there is not a shadow of doubt that the Boundary Commision for Wales will have to take them into account when it makes its final recommendations.

Should the Bill be defeated, the commission will have to operate on the basis of current boundaries. Parliament is not being taken for granted. Instead, there is an opportunity for the Boundary Commission for Wales to take into account the sort of structure that is proposed in the Bill in the full knowledge that it will have to revise its thinking if the Bill is amended before its reaches the statute book.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) approved of the guidelines for the local government boundary commission. He said that, in London, the time had come to cross the borough boundaries. In fact, there is a principle that there should be constituencies of more or less equal size. I understood from what he said that he accepted that as a general principle, while emphasising that that does not always fit easily with respecting local government and other boundaries and social links. That tension will always be there and the boundary commission must balance that. No doubt its members will read the report of this debate and note the remarks that the hon. Gentleman and others made about the position in London. There is sufficient guidance for the boundary commission in schedule 2 of the 1986 Act——

**Mr. Soley:** Will the Minister go a little further and tell the boundary commission that greater priority should be given to the sense of community? That is especially true if it is thinking of crossing borough boundaries. The sense of community, especially in inner-city areas, must be maintained; it must not be subservient to the geographical lines, which often appear to override the sense of community.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and no doubt the commission will note his views. It would be wrong of me to give additional guidance to the commission on how to interpret its responsibilities. Its guidance is contained in the schedule to the 1986 Act, and it is for the boundary commission, not me, to construe that.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) recommended that we do exactly what we are planning to do in Scotland, which is not to make changes until the local government boundaries are either in statute form or in place. That is why the arrangements in the Bill for Scotland differ from those for Wales. I am sure that that makes complete sense. It is for the convenience of the boundary commissions and for the more accurate delineation of the constituency boundaries along the lines of those that are about to come into existence or that have already done so.

I ask the Committee to support the amendment and to reject the Opposition amendments.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendment proposed:* No. 3, in page 2, leave out lines 29 to 31.—*[Mr. Darling.]*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:—

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 249, Noes 298.

**Division No. 39]** **[9.58 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Abbott, Ms Diane | Benn, Rt Hon Tony |
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Benton, Joe |
| Ainger, Nick | Bermingham, Gerald |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Berry, Roger |
| Alton, David | Betts, Clive |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Blair, Tony |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Boateng, Paul |
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Boyce, Jimmy |
| Ashton, Joe | Boyes, Roland |
| Austin-Walker, John | Bradley, Keith |
| Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)* | Bray, Dr Jeremy |
| Barnes, Harry | Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)* |
| Battle, John | Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* |
| Bayley, Hugh | Burden, Richard |
| Beckett, Margaret | Byers, Stephen |
| Bell, Stuart | Caborn, Richard |

Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Jack Thompson and**
**Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Ellletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*It being after Ten o'clock,* THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report Progress and ask leave to sit again.*

*Committee report Progress; to sit again tomorrow.*

## Statutory Instruments, &c.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on motions 2 to 16.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.*

### COMPANIES

That the Company and Business Names (Amendment) Regulations 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1196), dated 19th May 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 20th May, be approved.

### HOUSING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Housing (Percentage of Approved Expense for Repairs Grants) (Lead Plumbing and Radon Gas Works) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 3rd June, be approved.

### RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft British Alcan Primary and Recycling Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft British Gas plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft British Railways Board (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft British Telecommunications plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Glasgow Underground (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Lochaber Power Company (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Mercury Communications Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Scottish Power plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.

That the draft Water Undertakings (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 6th May, be approved.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),*

### Air Transport

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 8051/91, relating to competition in the air transport sector, 8090/91, relating to an Agreement between the Community and the Kingdoms of Norway and Sweden on civil aviation, and 8270/91, relating to establishment of a single Community market in air transport; welcomes their general thrust, noting that the promotion of a liberal air transport market in Europe and the removal of artificial restrictions imposed by central government on the freedom of enterprise has been the United Kingdom's policy objective for several years; and supports the Government in seeking to establish as liberal a regime as possible in Europe, while providing safeguards to protect consumers and carriers from the effect of exploitation or predatory practices.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Human Rights (Brazil)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.15 pm

**Mr. David Alton** (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I am especially pleased to have the opportunity to raise on the Adjournment the problem of human rights abuses in Brazil. I particularly want to draw the House's attention to the problem of the street killings of Brazilian children and the selling of other children into sex slavery.

I am pleased to see that a number of other hon. Members are in their places who I know hope to speak in the debate. I should especially like to thank the hon. Members for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) and for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths), who, with me, have formed the all-party group to fight for the rights of Brazilian street children. They hope to be able to speak.

In the past months, in conjunction with the Jubilee campaign, we have endeavoured to raise the plight of the children who have been dying by their thousands in Brazil. I thank the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is in his place to answer the debate, for the personal interest that he has taken, and in so doing I link officials in his Department who were good enough to arrange the visit of Paulo Melo—a deputy in Rio who was a street child—to London in May, when he met the hon. Members for South Dorset and for Edinburgh, South and briefed us on the position first-hand.

I should like to thank the Prime Minister for taking time during his visit to the Rio summit to visit Sao Martinho—a Catholic home run for Brazilian street children—for taking the trouble to make representations to the Brazilian Government and for taking time to see Paulo Melo.

The purpose of the debate is to underline the widespread all-party concern about the killings and the sending of young children into sex slavery. I hope that the debate will encourage the Government to persist in their efforts to bring the killings to an end.

What are the facts? It is estimated that about 7 million homeless children live on the streets of Brazil. There are thought to be a further 10 million children on the streets who are not technically homeless. They are the victims of disease, hunger, drugs, vice and violence. They are preyed upon by criminals, the police and gunmen hired by local business men to clean up the neighbourhoods. In Rio alone, there are some 800,000 street children, of whom 20,000 have no homes. The rest have either run away or have been forced into begging or selling by their families. Many come from dispossessed peasant families who have lost their land and have moved to the sprawling favellas that surround the city. Church leaders estimate that in the past three years alone 5,000 poor children have been murdered in Brazil.

In his meeting with the hon. Members for Edinburgh, South and for South Dorset and myself, Paulo Melo produced official figures confirming more than 300 killings of children in Rio in the past year alone, with another 10,000 suffering from the effects of violence. Last week, an independent research group in Rio, the Centre for the Mobilisation of Marginalised Populations, put the number of adolescents and children murdered in the state of Rio in the past year at the even higher figure of 700.

*[Mr. David Alton]*

In addition to the killings, the Anti-Slavery International group made a submission to the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights in May this year. It highlighted the trafficking of young women and children into sex slavery and prostitution. State deputy Joao Batista repeatedly raised the issue. For his pains, he was shot dead in 1988. Paulo Melo told us how he had been forced personally to finance the publication of his parliamentary commission's report because the authorities disapproved of its contents. He also said that he had been threatened by a senior judge when he gave support to a grieving family who were seeking justice.

The complicity of the police, of the judiciary and of the highest reaches of Brazilian society has meant that the killings have continued and that the murders have gone on with impunity. Paulo Melo showed us in this building photographs of some of the children who had been butchered and dumped like vermin on the streets. The newspaper reports he gave us have a chilling familiarity, daily cataloguing the deaths of little children. Usually a child's body is found with several knife wounds or bullet holes. Torture is followed by a final, fatal wound to the head. Some children simply disappear. The allegation has also been made to me that in some cases the youngsters who have disappeared have been used as spare parts in expensive organ transplant operations in the United States and in Europe.

In addition to all those abuses of human rights, Brazil faces endemic, grinding poverty. It has a colossal foreign debt of $114 billion. Despite having ample means with which to feed its 144 million people, the world's eighth largest economy is unable to do so because it is also the most indebted. The result is that in some areas, 200 of every 1,000 children born may die in infancy. Last year, 350,000 children died of preventable diseases and one third of Brazilian children suffer from malnutrition.

What are we to do in the face of all that? First, the Government must continue to use every possible diplomatic and economic measure against Brazil until it brings to justice the perpetrators of the violence. Secondly, we should link our aid to measures that will create a more just society. Thirdly, we should demand to know what has happened to the children who were swept off the streets in preparation for the Rio summit. Fourthly, we should support practically places such as Sao Martinho, which feeds 200 children daily. It is desperate for food and resources. The Prime Minister himself visited it during his recent stay and it was previously visited by the Princess of Wales. Fifthly, we should ask our officials in Brazil—I hope that the Minister will be able to give this undertaking tonight—to monitor and to continue to investigate the allegations concerning racketeering in human organs for transplant, the selling of children into sex slavery and the complicity of the authorities in the murders of children.

Men such as Paulo Melo run huge personal risks in exposing those acts of barbarism and cruelty. By supporting him, Parliament will act true to the spirit of William Wilberforce, our greatest ever champion of human rights. He once said:

> "It is a barbarous policy which confronts the troubles of a turbulent land by the extermination of its own inhabitants. This is the calm, not of order, but of inaction; it is not tranquillity, but the stillness of death."

So it is in Brazil today.

10.23 pm

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): People may wonder why Members of Parliament become especially passionately involved in a particular cause. My eyes were opened to the issue because an individual constituent was brought face to face with the problems, which is often the reason why Members of Parliament become involved.

Bruce Harris is the South American director of Casa Alianza, or the convent house. He is a constituent of mine who lived in Wareham and now works in South America. He made a plea for help to me because he was being shot at in Guatemala simply for trying to bring to the public's attention the sort of problems that we have also witnessed in Brazil and other countries.

The House can do a great deal to urge the Government to talk to their counterparts in Latin America. The spotlight has already been switched on. The Government should keep it focused on the problem until it is tackled properly by the people on the ground. There is no question but that all the people of Brazil will need to concentrate their minds and efforts to make their Government work towards solving the problems.

I pay tribute to the Minister, whom I know has visited various Governments and discussed the problem. I also pay tribute to the Prime Minister. When he attended the conference in Brazil a fortnight ago one of his main acts was to show that street children are of great concern to this country. We do not want to be over-critical this evening. We want to offer the hand of friendship to the people of Brazil and to their Government. We are trying to help them and this evening's spotlight will help to illuminate the problem.

My colleagues, who started the all-party street children group, will continue to work until we feel that the problem has been properly tackled.

10.26 pm

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths** (Edinburgh, South): As we all know, the Earth summit has moved on from Rio, but visitors to it, including the Prime Minister, and the world press saw a great deal and focused attention on the plight of the street children there.

As many of the world's wealthy countries gathered there was genuine shock at the plight of street children, which has been highlighted in the excellent report from the Jubilee campaign on street children in Brazil and Guatemala. I believe that its campaign to protect children's rights did a great deal to ensure that street children were not subject to wholesale clearances and slaughter when the summit took place, although I accept what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) said about the unanswered questions. I pay tribute to him for his work and for securing this Adjournment debate. As he rightly said, it is a question not merely of murder but of sex slavery.

I pay tribute to Mr. Wilfred Wong of Frederick street in London for his efforts to draw the matter to my attention and to that of other members of my party. The concern showed by the Government is greatly appreciated. The Brazilian Government must take action to stop child poverty, child prostitution and killings, to bring traffickers and murderers to justice, and to provide proper accommodation and education for those children.

The western banks and financiers must relieve the crushing burden of debt. We will welcome the Minister's comments on those issues and his support in progressing the matter to end human misery on a massive scale.

10.28 pm

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) who has done a great service to the House in raising a matter that we must all be troubled about.

I have been to South America. I attended the world conference of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, about 19 months ago in Quito, Ecuador. Although that is not Brazil, I saw street children. I saw the extraordinary contrast between Members of Parliament from all over the world, attending a conference with all the razzmatazz, and staying in a wonderful hotel provided with every conceivable comfort, and the children who were sleeping on the pavement outside that hotel all night.

When we went out by bus we had police protection from the children. When we went out to various engagements and occasions at night and we returned to the hotel at midnight, hundreds of children surrounded the coaches asking for anything that we could provide for them.

Brazil is a relatively prosperous country compared with some of the other South American countries. But I want to make it plain to the House that the problem of street children goes right across South America. It is the result of over-population. The national and local governments cannot fulfil the housing and economic needs of large families. Most of the street children come from excessively large families. The parents can no longer care for the young so the children are pushed out on to the street, where they form their own street gangs. It is extremely difficult for those young people ever to have normal lives again. They protect, feed and help each other but it is not surprising that in Sao Paulo in Brazil four fifths of today's prison population comprises former street children. It is an epidemic problem.

At the Quito conference I found it disturbing that, although I and the British delegation raised the problem of street children, the South American countries did not want to discuss the matter. One country said that the problem was being dealt with and hostels were being built. But none of the countries was comfortable discussing or seeking to deal with the problem of street children.

The hon. Member for Mossley Hill has undertaken an important task in asking the British Government what they can do about street children. It is a hideous, bizarre and horrific problem. I suggest that the British Government have to decide whether they can take a position. I do not believe that they can do much on their own. I understand that the British Government gives £1·4 million in support to Brazil. Together the European Community countries give £47 million to Brazil. The institution of the EC gives £1·4 million. Altogether, Britain, the EC countries and the EC give almost £50 million to Brazil.

I am delighted to see the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), here tonight. I know that he is interested in the matter and will be anxious to do what he can. I would have thought that it would do a great deal of good if that £50 million were directed to the Brazilian Government on the condition that they did something about the problem and came back to the EC with practical proposals.

The problem of street children is a problem of over-population and large families. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider whether grants could be made to help the International Planned Parenthood Federation to do its splendid work. That would do a great deal to help street children in the years to come.

10.33 pm

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones):** I thank the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for bringing this subject to the attention of the House. Its importance has been underlined by the number of hon. Members who have taken part in the debate, including my hon. Friends the Members for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) and for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). The Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), has also remained here specifically to listen to the debate.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister recently visited Brazil. That visit drew attention to not only Latin America and the environment but the problem of street children. My right hon. Friend reported to the House on 15 June on his visit to Rio. A passage in that report contained information about his discussions with President Collor about street children. I shall return to that later in my remarks. We are all very much aware of, and distressed by, the human rights situation in Brazil, which the hon. Gentleman has brought to the attention of the House this evening.

The plight of street children is particularly tragic. Human rights abuses are always a matter for concern, particularly when children are the target. We hope that the attention which the Earth summit has brought to their existence will serve to act as a catalyst to action to improve their situation.

To pick up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams, Ministers of the EC and the Rio group, which includes Brazil, agreed at their meeting in Santiago on 29 May, which I attended, to pay special regard to the needs of children. But we should not overlook the efforts which President Collor and his administration have begun to make—a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset.

The Brazilian Government adopted the Statute of the Child in 1990. A parliamentary commission into the assassination of street children has been set up and its report recently adopted. While confirming the gravity of the problem, it has made a number of practical recommendations, for example, on the carrying of firearms by security firms.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) said in the House on 2 June, the Prime Minister, who visited a refuge for street children in Rio, raised the subject with President Collor and expressed readiness to continue to help. As President Collor told the Prime Minister, the federal Government are pressing those states most affected to take steps to defend children against abuse.

Hon. Members will be interested to know that municipalities now do not get Government help unless

*[Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones]*

they have a programme in place for street children. The Attorney-General is taking steps to correct the position where members of the military and the military police cannot be tried by civil courts, and is seeking to punish those responsible for deaths. The private sector is also helping. A number of companies in Brazil have adopted street children's centres. All that gives us some modest reason for hope for the future as far as these children are concerned.

However, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset said, the phenomenon of abandoned children is not confined to Rio de Janeiro. It is acute in other parts of Brazil but also prevalent in many other countries, not just in Latin America. It stems principally from poverty and lack of education.

We are discussing with the Brazilian authorities a number of urban health care projects, and we are assisting the non-governmental organisations—the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development and Oxfam—in their work in that area. Child Hope UK has just received some £100,000, and Flowers of Tomorrow £20,000 during Baroness Chalker's recent visit to Rio de Janeiro.

As the hon. Member for Mossley Hill is well aware, we invited Dr. Paulo Melo, the President of the Rio state commission on the extermination of street children, to come to the United Kingdom in May as a guest of Government to discuss the problem. He has a number of interesting ideas in mind—for example, the expansion of professionally staffed legal centres which make it possible for people to lodge complaints against the police in an effective way. My officials and I shall keep in touch with him to help where we can. As the hon. Member for Mossley Hill said, Dr. Melo—a former street child—said that the United Kingdom has done more to help than any other nation. I recognise that, given the scale of the problem, that should not and will not make us complacent. But in view of Dr. Melo's standing in his subject, we can take some satisfaction from it.

We cannot bring about change single-handed and it is the Brazilian authorities that have the first responsibility. UNICEF is already working with the Brazilian authorities, assisting with police training. We have impressed upon the Brazilians the need to control child abuse. Some of the problem stems from the fact that children under 18 cannot be held responsible for criminal acts under the law, so very young children are often encouraged by their elders to embark on a life of criminal violence. I visited street children in Guatemala and can say that not all street children are young innocents. But the problem is that the fear that they instil in the public ensures that punishment falls on innocent and guilty alike —and often very terrible indeed it is.

It will take time to eradicate ill-treatment by vigilante groups, but I believe that a start is being made. The Brazilians themselves and the Brazilian Government are those we must look to for prime action, although we shall continue to encourage and support them. We are well aware that street children are not the only problem. The fate of young girls recruited as domestic staff in the mining camps is also beginning to cause serious concern. That problem will be even more difficult to control because abuse tends to take place in districts far removed from the rule of law. Once again, the solution is education and training which would allow those girls to earn a proper living. Their plight is a familiar phenomenon of under-development. We have just heard of similar problems in Mozambique. I hope, as I am sure do other hon. Members, that the Rio debate on sustainable development will lead, in time, to conditions in which the pressures that create the problems of street children and rural exploitation begin to fade.

Abuse of human rights is, alas, widespread, and I hope that the House will allow me to mention rural workers, whose problems we have not either forgotten or ignored. After the interest created by the Chico Mendes trial, we have continued to monitor the position closely, particularly the annulment of the sentence of one of the accused, Darly Alves da Silva, who is due to be re-tried. We are in close touch with the Rubber Tappers Union and the Amazon workers centre on that. We have also arranged with the procurator general to be present at other impending, but less publicised trials, wherever possible.

I have listened with care to the views of hon. Members tonight and I share their concerns. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made those concerns known at the highest level in Brazil. We are doing what we can, but there is no simple or quick solution to the problem. The answer lies in tackling the problems of poverty and poor education. We will continue to encourage the Brazilian authorities and work with them and the admirable NGOs to help to find a solution to the terrible problems that the hon. Member for Mossley Hill brought to our attention tonight.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 23 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## EDUCATION

### Technology Curriculum

1. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to present the revised statutory order governing national curriculum technology.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten):** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I expect to present to the House a revised statutory order by the end of the summer term 1993, following statutory consultation on our proposals by the National Curriculum Council and the Curriculum Council for Wales.

**Mrs. Roche:** Does the Secretary of State accept that if his predecessors had worked with teachers, such drastic revision would not have been necessary? Therefore, will he work with the people responsible for implementing the technology curriculum to ensure that such changes work?

**Mr. Patten:** I am extremely grateful for all the hard work done by teachers to make that and other parts of the national curriculum work. In the past, all syllabuses have been changed and developed, as they will be in future. The aim of the proposed revision, which will be out for consultation, is to ensure a tilt from the theoretical to the applied. As my hon. Friends and I have made numerous visits to schools, we have gained the impression that such a change is much needed.

### Local Management of Schools

2. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made in relation to the development of the programme of local management of schools in Lancashire.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Eric Forth):** Local management of schools is progressing well in Lancashire. All primary and secondary schools have been funded by formula since April 1990. Most now have delegated budgets and all will have full management powers from 1994.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a sixth-form college in Blackpool that has been conspicuously successful in local management as it has enabled the headmaster, staff and governors to employ local tradesmen at a far more competitive cost to make improvements to the school more quickly than would have happened in the days of the old local education authority bureaucracies? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that I hope to have an opportunity to show him or one of his ministerial colleagues that sixth-form college when they are next in the district?

**Mr. Forth:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that positive and encouraging message. It fits in exactly with the experiences of my right hon. Friend and myself as we visited schools and colleges up and down the country, where the message that we received was that local management was working well. It is giving school managers the opportunity to take responsibility and use it to the benefit of their school. I believe that the example given by my hon. Friend should be an inspiration to schools and colleges up and down the country, and I cannot wait to visit the college.

**Mr. Pike:** Does the Minister accept that the majority of schools in Lancashire feel that the biggest problem with LMS is that the Government have provided insufficient cash resources? If there are insufficient cash resources in the first instance, schools cannot carry out the job. Will he recognise the problem caused by stable staff who are higher salaried, which puts severe pressure on the cash-limited budget?

**Mr. Forth:** That exchange could not sum up better the difference between Conservative and Labour Members. We heard from a Conservative Member who was proud of the achievements of his local education system and of a specific college. All we hear from a Labour Member is the tired, routine whingeing that we have become so used to. It really is not good enough; it really will not do. The other lesson that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has yet to learn is that there is no established connection between expenditure and quality of education. Resources will be available where appropriate, but we look to school managers and teachers to go for quality, which is what we want from them.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my hon. Friend consider the special requirements of children with special needs in Lancashire? Is he aware of the forthcoming Audit Commission report slamming local authorities for their failure to account for the performance of children with special needs?

**Mr. Forth:** That is an important matter. I pay tribute to the personal and political commitment that my hon. Friend has made over many years to it. I defer to his judgment on it. I am aware of the forthcoming Audit Commission report and of its contents. My noble Friend the Minister of State has had a lot to say about it recently in another place. She, the Secretary of State and I are working together to ensure that the delivery of education to children with special needs is of the best. We shall shortly have some important proposals to make which I am sure will please my hon. Friend and many others.

### Selection

3. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has any proposals to reintroduce selection at 11 years throughout the country.

**Mr. Patten:** We have consistently made it clear that the Government do not intend to impose any particular

organisational pattern for schools. It is, in the first instance, for local education authorities and school governors to establish the organisation most appropriate for their area, in the light of local needs and the wishes of parents and the community. That is why today there are, for example, at least 117 grammar schools maintained by 24 of the 109 LEAs in England, with a further 40 grammar schools in the grant-maintained sector. There are some 30 so-called bilateral schools in the country, which operate a mixed pattern of selective and non-selective admissions arrangements, as well as three technical schools and 13 city technology colleges. There are also comprehensive schools that select some pupils suited to particular specialisms offered by those schools.

**Mr. Callaghan:** I listened with great interest to that statement about the 11-plus. Given that the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor stated on the BBC "On the Record" programme that he would be delighted to see grammar schools flourishing, and given what is happening with the 11-plus in the Wandsworth area, does the Secretary of State intend to reintroduce the selective process by stealth through the schools opt-out system?

**Mr. Patten:** Many schools in the maintained and grant-maintained system are considering or developing specialisms in particular areas. That should be welcomed, because it liberates the talents of all our children. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the antediluvian, neo-clause 4 arguments of the late 1960s which he has just raised from the grave are wholly unsuitable for purposes of comparison with the early 1990s. We have as a guarantee of good-quality education the national curriculum, nationally assessed and inspected, for all our children. There will be no second-tier schools in this country by the time we have finished.

**Mr. Bowis:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that selection is wilfully misunderstood by some Opposition Members and that if there is no selection there is no way to match pupils and their abilities to the courses available in the students' best interests? Will he therefore warmly endorse the selection by aptitude which is the basis of Wandsworth's selection process?

**Mr. Patten:** I am extremely interested in what is going on in Wandsworth, as all of us in the Conservative party always are. I must not fetter my discretion for a later stage when these proposals for a change of character come before me, but it is open to maintained schools—grant-maintained or local education authority-maintained—to introduce a large measure of specialism without having to come to the Secretary of State for permission to do so—just as comprehensive schools throughout the country can, I am advised, if they so wish, select small numbers of pupils by aptitude for particular subjects if that is what the local community wants. There is a rich diversity of provision, and so there should be.

**Mr. Fatchett:** The Secretary of State would do well to learn an original script between one Question Time and another. May I remind him that he criticised my views on selection on the last occasion? May I congratulate him on his decision not to introduce selection at the Castle Hall school in Mirfield and ask him to resist both proposals from the right-wing extremists behind him and all attempts to introduce selection by the back door in grant-maintained schools? The arguments are known; selection is wasteful and divisive, and the improvement in our staying-on rates and in the additional numbers in higher education have derived from a predominantly comprehensive system. Why does not the right hon. Gentleman recognise that and drop this 19th century idea of selection?

**Mr. Patten:** As for the Castle Hall school decision, it is open to the school to re-apply at an early stage, having reconsidered the basis of its first application.

I have visited many of our excellent comprehensive schools and I am extremely grateful to the teachers and other staff in them for the good quality of education that they provide. I have found time and again when visiting comprehensive schools that the staff are selecting children for streaming because of their particular aptitudes. Selection is part and parcel of what goes on within much of the comprehensive system. It would do the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) well to recognise that.

## Grant-maintained Schools

4. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure he has for the number of pupils being educated in grant-maintained schools.

5. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of secondary schools have been granted or have now applied for grant-maintained status.

**Mr. Patten:** The total number of pupils currently being educated in grant-maintained schools is estimated to be 160,000.

The proportion of all secondary schools to have been granted grant-maintained status is 5·6 per cent., and 6·7 per cent. of all secondary schools have now applied for grant-maintained status. A total of 417 secondary schools have held or are committed to hold a ballot. This represents already just over 10 per cent. of all secondary schools. I can report to the House also that there have been about 2,000 inquiries to the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust since the general election seeking further information on grant-maintained status. There are now about 150 inquiries a day.

**Mr. Garnier:** Will my right hon. Friend help to increase the number of pupils at grant-maintained schools by dealing speedily and favourably with an application from Bushloe high school in my constituency? Is he aware that the application is made not on the basis of right-wing remarks or attitudes but because the pupils' parents, be they Liberal, Labour or Conservative, realise that the best chance of a good education within the school is provided by grant-maintained status?

**Mr. Patten:** I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. I note that his constituency has only one grant-maintained school within it so far, and that is Gartree school. It is an excellent school and I congratulate it on its progress. I hope that the number of grant-maintained schools in the constituency may soon be doubled. I look forward to receiving the application to which my hon. Friend has referred.

My hon. Friend should warn parents who support whichever of the political parties that he named that, despite recent reports in the national press of a change of heart by those on the Opposition Front Bench over

grant-mintained schools, and notwithstanding the warning that is contained in a document that those on the Opposition Front Bench have produced for some of the most extremist Labour authorities not to get in the way by pursuing guerrilla warfare tactics against schools that wish to go grant maintained, they reiterate in the document their total opposition to the principle of grant-maintained schools. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is positively antediluvian in wishing to go back further than the 19th century.

**Mr. Clapham:** Is the Secretary of State aware that opting out is threatening the proper management of secondary schools, to the detriment of pupils? Will he explain how the centralisation of secondary education will benefit choice and standards and provide opportunities?

**Mr. Patten:** If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my reply to the question of the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) he would have heard a pretty accurate description of the wide range and diversity of choice that is available already and on which, I think, schools in the grant-maintained sector will build. I hear, for example, that some schools wish to teach technology bilingually in English and German. That is a marvellous idea. Let us see many more ideas of that sort coming forward from the grant-maintained sector.

**Mr. Pawsey:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the increasing number of young people in grant-maintained schools is a clear sign of the success of those schools? Does he agree that grant-maintained schools represent an admirable opportunity for specialisation? For example, we have inner-city schools specialising in music, science, technology and mathematics. Does my right hon. Friend agree also that these schools represent an excellent opportunity to improve the quality and standard of state education, the sector in which the majority of children are educated?

**Mr. Patten:** As my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is not in his place, I think that I can risk saying that if schools want to specialise in ballet—*[Interruption.]* Oh, he is here. It is too late; I cannot bite on my tongue. If schools want to specialise in ballet, music, performing arts, science or languages, so be it.

I repeat to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) what I said earlier: on many occasions there is no need for schools to apply to the Secretary of State for a change of character. Generally speaking, specialisation can be developed without an application for a change of character, as can the development of a few places for pupils with a particular aptitude for certain subjects in which a school wishes to specialise.

**Mr. Straw:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that, for all the spin that he tried to put on his figures, since the general election just 56 schools out of a potential 24,000 have decided to ballot to opt out? That takes us right through to October. Does not that figure show that, far from there being an avalanche of opting out since the election, a great many parents have seen through the rhetoric of opt-out and realise that opting out will lead to no improvement in standards, a loss of parental choice and tight central controls from Whitehall?

**Mr. Patten:** With inquiries coming in at the rate of 150 a day, that is a pretty surprising remark from the hon. Gentleman. I am afraid to say that in some parts of the country Labour authorities, over which the hon. Gentleman has no control, have been trying to do all that they possibly can to stop local schools going for grant-maintained status. I promise the House that in the next education Bill to be introduced in the autumn we will introduce measures to put a stop to that.

**Mr. Mans:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the advantages of grant-maintained schools is that they reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, which is to the benefit of the schools and results in less money being spent on administration and more on teaching?

**Mr. Patten:** That is why we must try to spend as much money as possible on pupils and as little money as possible on administration. That is not to say that good administration is not needed under a local education authority or a grant-maintained system—of course it is. We need better management and better leadership from those who run our schools. That is something which we need to promote during the next five years.

## Teachers' Pay

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has any further plans to meet teachers' union representatives to discuss teachers' pay; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Patten:** I expect to meet the teacher unions again early next year to discuss the second report of the school teachers review body.

**Mr. Skinner:** When the Secretary of State meets the teacher unions, will he tell them that he intends to restore teachers' negotiating status in matters affecting their pay and conditions? Does he recall that before the general election the review body offered the teachers 7·8 per cent? After the election another review body gives the judges, the generals and the top civil servants 30 per cent. Is not that an example of the double standards being operated by the Government? Are not teachers just as important to society as judges and generals? What has all this to do with the classless society? Give the teachers the same.

**Mr. Patten:** I congratulate the interim Leader of the Opposition on this excellent question. At least we are getting some opposition from below the Gangway. I would vote for the hon. Gentleman if I had the chance—I think. Before the general election the 7·8 per cent. pay award announced by the teachers review body was warmly welcomed by five out of the six teacher trade unions. Needless to say, the National Union of Teachers did not care for it much, and we have heard the NUT's song sung this afternoon by the interim Leader of the Opposition. The pay review arrangements are working well and I look forward, as I am bound statutorily to do, to meeting the trade unions in due course to hear what they have to say, but the decision is for the review body. Since 1979, teachers' pay has risen by 45 per cent. ahead of inflation. It fell between 1975 and 1979.

**Mr. Haselhurst:** Does my right hon. Friend regard the vacancy rate among teachers as a clue to the adequacy of teachers' remuneration and will he say what the signs are in that respect?

**Mr. Patten:** As I have just said, teachers' pay has risen by 45 per cent. ahead of inflation since 1979. That is ahead of the general average in adult earnings. The average salary for a schoolteacher—there are 400,000 of them in Britain at the moment, a considerable number—is some £20,000. The vacancy level is lower than it has been for more than a decade, which is good news.

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** As the Secretary of State is so enthusiastic about pay review bodies, why does he fail to apply to the higher education sector the logic that he adopts in respect of schoolteachers? Why does he not establish a pay review body for university teachers, as he has been urged to do by them and by many Conservative as well as Opposition Members?

**Mr. Patten:** As the hon. Gentleman represents the other half of the university city that embraces my constituency, he knows that pay negotiations are currently under way. There are many more universities and polytechnics than ever before, and they are developing very well. Record numbers are staying on in higher and further education. When I was an undergraduate in the 1960s, the number was about 220,000. The figure today is about 800,000. Universities today derive a substantial proportion of their incomes from sources other than the Government, which gives them much more flexibility when dealing with pay.

## GCSE

7. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current teaching arrangements for GCSE; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend is wholly satisfied with the adequacy of the current teaching arrangements for the GCSE.

**Mr. Madel:** As the efficient use of teachers' time is so important in raising GCSE standards, can my hon. Friend confirm that although tests at 14 are important, they will not get in the way of or disturb essential classroom work on raising GCSE standards?

**Mr. Forth:** The tests for 14-year-olds are straightforward for teachers to administer and to mark, and are economical of their time. The tests are not expected to encroach significantly on the time that teachers can devote to their GCSE pupils. That is not to say that the marking and manageability of the test will not be examined closely before we settle the detailed arrangements for testing 14-year-olds in 1993. I emphasise that the test results will give teachers hard, objective information about each pupil's strengths and weaknesses, which will provide pupils with the best possible start to their GCSE courses. I understand my hon. Friend's concern, but I can reassure him that there is no problem or incompatibility.

## Local Management of Schools

8. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence he has of schools operating local management of schools getting into budgetary difficulties.

**Mr. Forth:** The Department receives some letters from governors and headteachers expressing concern about their school budgets, but we have no evidence of schools getting into budgetary difficulties.

**Mr. Cohen:** The Minister keeps pretending that there is no evidence that schools are encountering budgetary difficulties, but the budget of one school in Leyton does not match its staff costs, which is creating long-term teacher vacancies and causing early retirements. Does not the Minister acknowledge that the LMS formula discriminates against longer-serving, experienced teachers, because it is based on average teacher costs instead of actual costs—which are higher in many cases? Special measures are needed to help schools that run into LMS difficulties.

**Mr. Forth:** I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman brings such problems to me, but he appears to have bypassed his local education authority somewhere along the line. I suggest that he questions Waltham Forest LEA about the extent to which it delegates school budgets—because it is not yet up to the mark—and the central administration costs that the authority still seems obliged to carry. If the hon. Gentleman can persuade his LEA to sort out those problems, I expect that, under a developed and successful LMS, the very schools to which the hon. Gentleman refers would make better use of their funds, at the level at which expenditure decisions should be made. The hon. Gentleman should ask his local education authority the very questions that he put to me.

**Sir Malcolm Thornton:** As my hon. Friend approaches the three-year LMS review, will he reflect on the fact that in many local education authorities, the formula needs revising in two respects? Although many schools welcome added control over their own budgets, some pressures are emerging. I refer in particular to special educational needs, which have already been mentioned this afternoon, and the question of average and real costs, which was raised by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

**Mr. Forth:** We have undertaken to examine again the latter point that my hon. Friend raised, but we shall bear it in mind that many LEAs and schools are coping admirably with the changes that are occurring. When making our review, we will bear their managerial successes in mind.

I am happy to reiterate that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have special educational needs very near the top of our agenda. We are always concerned to ensure that special educational needs are dealt with properly, promptly and adequately within the education system—however it may develop. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be pleased when he learns of the developments that we envisage, which we will announce very shortly.

**Mr. Don Foster:** Many schools in my constituency are in budgetary difficulties because of a 4 per cent. budget cut brought about by poll-tax-capping legislation. According to the county treasurer's estimate, there will be a 10 per cent. cut next year. What advice does the Secretary of State give those schools?

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend and his fellow Ministers would advise all such schools to ask their local education authority what it is doing, what its policies are and how it expects matters to develop. Under our system,

local education authorities still rightly carry the bulk of the responsibilities for local decision-making. I would also advise the schools to make inquiries of the kind described earlier by my right hon. Friend and to consider again all the opportunities that are open to them. If they are not satisfied with what their local education authority is doing, they should break free from it.

**Mr. Harris:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that I have drawn his attention to the problems affecting a number of schools in my constituency after talking to my local education authority about them? Will he bear out the impression given in his letters to me that the Government are taking action on the issue of average, as opposed to actual, salaries?

**Mr. Forth:** I am certainly conscious of the approaches made by my hon. Friend on behalf of the schools in his constituency. They should come as no surprise to anyone who knows how assiduously he looks after his schools and, indeed, all his constituents.

Through my hon. Friend, I am aware of the transitional difficulties that have occurred in some local education authorities and some schools. We shall consider those problems sympathetically; in the meantime, however, I stress that it is up to local education authorities to find their own answers to meet their local education needs. They must work out the best approach, along with the schools. That must be right, and we would be loth to interfere with it.

**Mr. Straw:** How can the Minister claim that there is no evidence of the major problems that have been caused by local management of schools? Is he completely marooned in the jacuzzi-swirling glass palace, aptly known as the Sanctuary, that passes for the headquarters of the Department for Education? Is he not aware of the existence of independent evidence showing that parents now have to contribute between £80 million and £100 million from their own pockets to meet the shortcomings of local management? Does he not realise that many schools are being forced to appoint the cheapest teachers and to sack the best as a consequence of the scheme?

**Mr. Forth:** Had the hon. Gentleman been fortunate enough to occupy the position now occupied by my right hon. Friend, I wonder how long he would have been able to resist that very jacuzzi—were it to exist. Fascinating though it may be, however, that question can exist only in the imagination.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong to give the impression that there are widespread problems. Many schools and local education authorities up and down the country are handling local management of schools very well. As we know from our visits to schools—and as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) confirmed earlier—in many instances local management has been welcomed by governors, teachers and parents. How Opposition Members can be so blind to that escapes me entirely.

Parents are prepared to help schools with funding when they think that it is needed. Opposition Members are completely wrong to see that as something evil; surely it is a signal of the commitment and involvement that parents are prepared to give their schools, and I believe that it is good and healthy.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** Is my hon. Friend aware that some of the smaller primary schools are beginning to have difficulty in balancing the books, not least because the funding formula does not adequately recognise that fixed costs bear disproportionately heavily on the budgets of small schools with fewer pupils? Will he listen sympathetically to the representations that are made to him, and does he agree that smaller primary schools are essential to the lives of the communities that they serve?

**Mr. Forth:** I can understand the question, that my hon. Friend asked very well indeed, but the balance of expenditure within a local education authority between the secondary and primary sectors is, and must be, very much a matter for that authority to determine. It may well vary from time to time and between one authority and another, but safeguards in the formulae for small schools, and for small primary schools in particular, should operate very much to their advantage. If my hon. Friend has a case in mind, I ask her to let me know about it and I shall consider it to ensure that the school is benefiting as much as it should from the protections that we have put in place.

## Social Work Service

9. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the future of the education social work service.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Nigel Forman):** My right hon. Friend sees a continuing role for the education social work service —more commonly known as the education welfare service —in working with schools, parents and pupils to promote and maintain regular school attendance. The importance of that role is reinforced by new attendance and pupil reporting regulations, which place greater emphasis on the identification of unauthorised absence.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Minister must be aware that, by any measure, there has been a huge increase in the workload of the education social work service in recent years. What steps are the Government taking to improve staffing levels to take account of its increasing workload? What assessment have they made of the proposed introduction of league tables on truancy for the work of education social workers, and is the Minister aware that that proposal and the direction in which the Government are moving on the issue fly directly in the face of the spirit and intentions of the Children Act 1989?

**Mr. Forman:** We certainly value the work of the education welfare service. It is very important that its 3,000 officers in England and Wales should continue their supportive work. There is no suggestion that truancy is anything other than a most serious problem which the Government view very seriously, not least because it is estimated that in the worst-affected areas perhaps one in five pupils is truanting at some stage. We shall continue to ensure that the education welfare service does the job for which it is appointed and shall support it through the new regulations to which I referred in my first answer.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Will my hon. Friend confirm the importance of the relationship between the education psychology service and the education welfare service, particularly in relation to the need to produce proper statements for children in need? Is he aware of the possible

dangers to the education psychology service from schools opting out, and will he ensure that the service has a future, just as grant-maintained schools also have a future?

**Mr. Forman:** I think that my hon. Friend is under a misapprehension. Opted-out schools are making use of the service. Furthermore, we believe that it is right to give discretion on these matters to grant-maintained schools so that they can make decisions in the light of their own circumstances.

## Nursery Education

11. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to expand the provision of nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the change in the provision of nursery education, both independent and state funded, since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** It is for local authorities to determine the extent and form of their provision for under-fives. Between 1979 and 1991, the number of under-fives in maintained schools in England rose from 429,000 to 604,000, while the number in independent schools rose from 28,000 to 45,000 —an increase of nearly 200,000 children in all.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** Is it not an abdication of duty for the Government always to seek to say that it is solely for local authorities to make provision for nursery education? Will the Minister be more positive about what the Government plan to do to encourage and promote the provision of nursery education throughout Britain? Does he accept that there are great variations in provision from one end of the country to the other and that in some areas it is inadequate? Is not one of the best ways of increasing the life chances of children from underpriviliged families to give them statutory access to nursery places if they wish to take them up?

**Mr. Forman:** The hon. Gentleman should know that the provision of nursery education has increased under the Government from four in 10 to five in 10, which is a very satisfactory increase. He should also take account of the fact that the policy on which his party fought the previous election would have involved a considerable increase in expenditure on such matters—in excess of £500 million —money which could well be spent by local authorities for other purposes within the education budget.

**Mr. Brandreth:** Although I warmly welcome the increase in expenditure and the diversity in recent years in nursery provision, whereby we are now spending about £740 million a year on the under-fives——

**Hon. Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am very keen to get through the Order Paper and I do not like long statements. Straight into the question please.

**Mr. Brandreth:** The question is, does not my hon. Friend welcome that expenditure, because nursery education is the bedrock of education and represents enormous value for money?

**Mr. Forman:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the importance of diverse provision for the under-fives. If one considers the international figures, one finds that this country compares very well with our European partners. If one also includes day care, the figure for the relevant age which is covered is about nine in 10.

**Ms. Armstrong:** Will the Minister recognise that almost all the increase there has been because the commitment of Labour authorities to ensure that they offer children——

**Mr. Patten:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. If the hon. Lady is not directly putting a question, I must ask her to do so.

**Ms. Armstrong:** I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I suspect that the Secretary of State did not hear. I asked, will the Minister—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We all want to hear, including the Secretary of State.

**Ms. Armstrong:** Will the Minister recognise that fact, and will he commit himself to ensuring that every child in the nation gets the opportunity to receive publicly funded nursery education as the very best start for his education life?

**Mr. Forman:** That intervention from the Labour Front Bench was a bit rich, when one recalls that under the previous Labour Government, whom I imagine the hon. Lady supported, the funding for nursery provision was cut substantially from 1976 to 1978.

## Grant-maintained Schools

13. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure for the number of schools that are operating under grant-maintained status.

**Mr. Forth:** There are 217 schools operating under grant-maintained status and a further 50 schools have been approved or are minded to be approved.

**Mr. Greenway:** North Yorkshire schools continue to achieve some of the best examination results in the country and parental approval levels of local schools are very high, but parents and governors note the experience of grant-maintained schools, which have more books, more teachers for pupils and better equipment. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that when he publishes the White Paper in the autumn there will be a scheme for the grant-maintained system to attract the best as well as the worst schools?

**Mr. Forth:** My hon. Friend shows a greater understanding of the grant-maintained school system than any members of the Opposition have displayed, because, as he says, the reality is that anyone who visits grant-maintained schools cannot but be impressed by the enthusiasm and confidence of heads, governors and teachers who have discovered that to be in such control of their own futures is a liberation, and one which they welcome. That is the main justification for schools to consider grant-maintained status carefully and whether they wish to accept it. The White Paper that my right hon. Friend hopes to publish shortly will fully reflect that and all the advantages.

### Local Management of Schools

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the question of local management of schools budgets within the last four weeks.

**Mr. Forth:** The Department has received a number of representations within the past four weeks concerning the local management of schools.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Is not the real reason why the Government are so insensitive to the funding crisis in state schools that the great majority of Conservative Members send their children to private schools—public schools—and find their way around the difficulties that exist in the public sector? What do I say to governors in my constituency who are now resigning on the basis that they cannot manage with the scarce resources being allocated by the Government? What do we say in reply?

**Mr. Forth:** It ill becomes the hon. Gentleman to make such a tired and inaccurate accusation. I remind him and the House that my own children, those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and those of the Minister of State all went to the state system. To suggest that in some way we have no understanding of the needs or the strengths of the state system is irresponsible and wrong and ill becomes the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman made the accusation that governors all over the place were resigning. Many governors have seen their first term of office come to an end and have decided to step down to make way for others. We are confident that many more people will come forward to take up the responsibility and the challenge of being school governors and to take advantage of the new powers that we have given them. I welcome that.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Hall:** The Prime Minister is aware that local authorities nationally have had £15 billion of assets frozen in the bank because of his Government's policy. In the light of the national housing crisis we now face, will the Prime Minister give the House a straightforward answer to my question? Why do we not allow local authorities to build houses for rent, which are much needed, with the money that they already have in the bank?

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, local authorities are perfectly able to use a portion of their accumulated receipts and that has been the position for many years. It is the right position for us to keep and we have no intention of changing it.

Q2. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Amess:** I believe that what is good news for Basildon is good news for the rest of the country. Does the Prime Minister share my constituents' delight in Basildon at yesterday's historic European air fares agreement? Is not it the case that yesterday's agreement is a particular triumph for Britain and for Basildon, as we pressed for the liberalisation of air markets?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right. I have no doubt that the triumph of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is the very talk of Basildon at the moment. The Community reached an historic agreement yesterday on the final phase of aviation liberalisation. I believe that that is excellent news for the travelling public and it should mean more choice, better services and lower fares. It has been a long time coming, but it is a very welcome agreement.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Will the Prime Minister now serve the public interest by ensuring that the report by the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation into the Maxwell companies' pension fraud is published without delay?

**The Prime Minister:** I well understand the concerns generated by the whole Maxwell case. I understand that the Securities and Investments Board intends to publish a report on IMRO's findings and conclusions. However, the House will understand that it will be essential to ensure that publication does not jeopardise either civil or criminal proceedings in the Maxwell affair, including those currently under way against Kevin and Ian Maxwell.

**Mr. Kinnock:** I am grateful for that answer. However, I must express the hope that there will not be a delay, even given the requirement to take account of the implications for possible proceedings. Does the Prime Minister accept that the report, as so far recorded in the newspapers, says that the organisation fell short of the high standards which it should have expected of itself and that, therefore, publication is a pressing necessity so that everyone can know just how the organisation fell short, what is the Government's full responsibility in the matter and how that bears on the future of the Maxwell pensioners who have been robbed?

**The Prime Minister:** I understand the important point that the right hon. Gentleman has made, but, as I said a moment ago, the report will be published in due course. The SIB intends to publish a report of the findings and conclusions, but neither the right hon. Gentleman nor I would wish to prejudice in any way either the civil or criminal proceedings—nor, I believe, would any hon. Member.

**Mr. Kinnock:** May I in the meantime put it to the Prime Minister that we now know that in 1987 the Bank of England blocked an attempt by Robert Maxwell to take over a bank, that in the following year, 1988, the Department of Trade and Industry granted an investment licence to a main Maxwell company and that later that year IMRO renewed that licence? Is it not clear that in those circumstances both the Government and the system that they established have a clear and serious charge of negligence to answer and that they must answer it? The main responsibility is not with the SIB to publish the

report; it must remain with the Government and they must account for their actions and omissions in the whole disgraceful episode.

**The Prime Minister:** I think that the right hon. Gentleman still has not addressed his mind to the necessity of ensuring that nothing is done to prejudice civil or criminal proceedings. That is a matter which the right hon. Gentleman well understands. Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I am equally anxious to ensure that the report is considered alongside the SIB's assessment.

**Mrs. Chaplin:** Has my right hon. Friend seen the report that shows that many 14-year-olds like taking tests, in direct contradiction of the many so-called education experts? Is that not another example of how Conservative policy is good for pupils, parents and those who are employed in education?

**The Prime Minister:** I warmly welcome the news contained in yesterday's report about testing. It confirms that we were absolutely right to press ahead with testing in the teeth of opposition from the teaching unions and, indeed, from Opposition Members. I hope that, in the light of what has been said in the last couple of days, the Labour party will stop fighting testing, will support it and will change its policy, as it seems to have done on grant-maintained schools.

Q3. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Ross:** Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that it was a profound error of judgment for the British Government to press the European Community to lift its package of economic and oil sanctions against South Africa earlier this year? At the European Council meeting in Lisbon this Friday, will he press the EC to reconsider that decision, urge it to support the establishment of an interim Government in South Africa and seek international monitoring of the violence there?

**The Prime Minister:** No, I do not believe that that would be the right way to proceed. I share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the recent violence in South Africa. I also note the commitment of the South African Government to bring to justice the people responsible for that violence. The prime responsibility for law and order rests, as it must do, with the South African Government. But they have made enormous strides towards representative democracy. I understand the strength of feeling that exists at the moment, but it is of great importance that the talks do not break down and that they continue, for great progress has been made. The people who will stand to gain most from the successful conclusion of the talks are the people in South Africa who have least and about whom we should be most concerned.

**Mr. John Carlisle:** In the tragic and violent disorder that is now regrettably taking place in South Africa, is my right hon. Friend not absolutely right to send a message of support to President de Klerk, who has come so far in his brave and courageous attempt to find a democratic solution which is satisfactory to all parties? In those circumstances, should not the message go to Mr. Mandela and the African National Congress that empty gestures such as suggestions of Olympic boycotts and sanctions will only hinder their chances and restrict the people of South Africa in the wonderful opportunities that they now have in front of them?

**The Prime Minister:** Over recent months I have had many opportunities to discuss the present situation in South Africa with both President de Klerk and Mr. Mandela. I remain closely in touch with both of them. What is necessary at the moment is that both of them stand back from the present difficulties and then determine how it will be possible to continue the talks and reach a satisfactory conclusion.

**Mr. Ashdown:** Does the Prime Minister recall saying on 26 January that the Government's mortgage rescue scheme had "stopped repossessions"? Is he aware that since then, for every family mortgage rescued, 2,000 homes have been repossessed and that repossessions are now running at 140 families a day? Does he recognise that what he did then, although welcome, was too little and too late and that he now needs to do something more?

**The Prime Minister:** No. I have made it clear to the right hon. Gentleman that the proposals set out by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were there to diminish the number of repossessions—where people are in receipt of income support, the repossession does not proceed. Repossessions are falling and that has been acknowledged, not merely by the Government but by many others. The right hon. Gentleman should examine the facts.

**Mr. Jenkin:** Following my right hon. Friend's meeting with Members of the European Parliament last week and in the spirit of subsidiarity and our right to govern our democratic processes, is the Prime Minister able to assure the House that the European elections in 1994 will be conducted under the present voting system?

**The Prime Minister:** That is certainly my intention.

Q4. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Betts:** Would the Prime Minister like to commiserate with the millions of English football fans who have had to endure their team's performance during the past few weeks? Would he like to reflect on Graham Taylor's commitment to deal with his European problems by playing it long? Indeed, Graham Taylor might only be happy once he has picked the whole Wimbledon team to play for England. Does the Prime Minister agree that his European problems look just as difficult and troublesome? Does he further agree that, like the tactics of the England team manager, his commitment to play his European problems long, and to avoid an early debate on them in the House, is just as likely to prove to be unsuccessful?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman carries me with him on either proposition. I offer the same support and encouragement to the England football team that I was happy to offer to the Scottish team after its excellent performance in the recent championships. On the European policy of the Government, I have made it clear that we shall have a further debate

before the Committee stage of the Maastricht Bill. That remains the case, but the time is not yet right to bring the Bill back.

**Mr. Churchill:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the British Government's part in negotiating the first-ever global ban on chemical weapons. Does he agree that one of the gravest threats to peace in the years ahead will come from the acquisition of a non-conventional weapons capability by third-world military dictatorships, many supplied by European countries? Is it not time that steps were taken to put on notice British defence contractors and others in European countries that they cannot expect Government contracts if they forge documentation, as evidence shows has been happening, to avoid the Government's embargoes on the export of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is right in his strictures on chemical weapons. If he has any detailed information on the second aspect of his question, I should be happy to receive it.

Q5. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Enright:** Does the Prime Minister recall that in February the Government announced a settlement of RECHAR and promised action with all expedition? It is now July—[HON. MEMBERS: "June."] It is now almost July and no ground rules have been agreed. I have sent two questions to the President of the Board of Trade and have written him one letter, but he still has not replied. Will the right hon. Gentleman sack him and get something done?

**The Prime Minister:** It is almost July and I am sure that my right hon. Friend is almost ready to reply.

**Mr. Dunn:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that Conservative Members welcomed the abolition of the National Economic Development Council, or Neddy, last week for it meant an end to trade union domination and the running of the country through the union block vote?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I think that, in its day, Neddy did have a role to play, but that day has passed. I think that the right decision was taken by my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the President of the Board of Trade.

Q6. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will lists his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June 1992.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Meale:** Now that the Prime Minister has returned from Rio, where I hope that he learnt a lot about the environment, will he support moves in this Parliament to ban the hunting of animals, with dogs, for the pleasure of people? *[Interruption.]*

**The Prime Minister:** I am sorry, but if the hon. Gentleman repeats his question, I will try to answer it.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. If the hon. Member repeats his question, we will all be able to hear it.

**Mr. Meale:** Now that the Prime Minister has returned from Rio, where, undoubtedly, he learnt much about the environment, will he support legislation in the House to ban the hunting of animals, with dogs, for the pleasure of people?

**The Prime Minister:** No, Madam. That is a matter of personal choice.

# Unadopted Roads

3.31 pm

**Mr. Peter Hain** (Neath): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the law relating to the procedure whereby householders and frontagers may seek the making up and adoption of a road by a local authority; to require local authorities to act as guarantors for bank and building society loans taken out by householders and frontagers for the purposes of making up and adoption; and for connected purposes.

Many people may feel that this is not the burning issue of the day, but I assure the House that the many people who live in unadopted roads feel that they are cursed with a problem that no one wants to know about. For example, Pen-y-Banc road, in the old mining village of Seven Sisters in the Dulais valley in my constituency, has a primary school at one end, a cemetery at the other and a chapel in the middle. It is an unadopted road, that is to say, a public highway that is privately owned so that householders and frontagers rather than the local highway authority are responsible for its upkeep. As a result, it has been riddled with potholes for years and efforts by the residents to get it "made up" have been thwarted by the cost. The problem is further complicated by the fact that half of the road is owned by British Rail and, for BR, the state of it is not a priority.

Similar problems plague householders throughout Wales, and particularly in the former mining areas. According to a survey which I conducted with the help of local community councils, my constituency alone has 88 such unadopted roads, from Gwaun-cae-Gurwen and Cwmllynfell to my home village of Resolven. One study showed that there are 40,000 unadopted roads covering 4,000 miles across Britain. In Wales alone, there are about 3,000 unadopted roads. They are largely a hangover from the past when, for example, villages were built by pit owners and many of the roads were never made up.

The law governing unadopted roads is a tangled web. In certain circumstances, the local highway authority can require householders to upgrade their roads. Under section 230 of the Highways Act 1980, a notice can be served on frontagers where urgent

"repairs are needed to obviate danger to traffic".

That requires the frontagers to undertake the necessary work. If that notice is ignored by householders, the authority can do the work itself and then send the bill to the residents—a gesture that is hardly calculated to boost the popularity of the local council.

Householders can club together and finance the making up of their road, which could then lead to its adoption by the authority. However, the cost is often prohibitive. Where there is not unanimity among those in the street, perhaps because some simply cannot afford it, making up can be blocked. For pensioners or families living on the dreadfully low incomes prevalent in the south Wales valleys these days, £500, or £2,000—whatever the cost of making up their road may be—is completely out of the question. So unadopted streets continue to deteriorate, rotting away as people trip over potholes, fall into puddles or are dirtied by mud.

The highway authorities have a small fund for what are called urgent street works, but areas with plenty of unadopted roads, such as Wales, make it far too costly for local highway authorities even to begin to tackle the problem. In Neath, for example, the local highway authority, West Glamorgan county council, suffered heavy cuts in Welsh Office funding this year, as a result of which householders such as those in Pen-y-Banc, Seven Sisters, feel deeply aggrieved, especially when their road is often used by members of the public going to school, to chapel or to the cemetery. Some local residents joke sourly that such is the state of their road that one day there will be an accident on the way to the cemetery and an additional inmate will result.

Householders in unadopted roads can even be legally liable for accidents involving passers-by. Although the public have a right of way and do not contribute to the maintenance of an unadopted street, they can put in a claim if injured in an accident attributable to poor surface —a Catch 22 situation, if ever there was one, for local residents.

What can be done about the problem? In the current political environment, a nationally funded programme to make up unadopted roads is clearly out of the question. Perhaps it always will be squeezed by other priorities. One estimate of the scale of the problem puts the cost at over £2 billion. So a combination of cost and all the complexities of the legal problems means that a state of paralysis reigns.

My Bill proposes a new route. It is that we should have a nationally promoted scheme by which local authorities are permitted to act as guarantors for loans by householders taken out through financial institutions and ultimately claimable against the estate or sale of the property of the residents affected. In other words, householders would be given a choice. They would be able to take out a conventional loan and finance the entire cost of making up the street ready for adoption; or they could pay part of the cost; or they could pay nothing up front and have the cost of the loan set against the value of their homes.

For councils to act as guarantors in that way may be possible without affecting their capital allocations since they would mainly be acquiring a contingent liability. But if they needed to borrow, the Treasury should respond favourably, if only because no new public money would ultimately be involved. The important issue is to empower —indeed, positively to encourage—local highway authorities and borough councils to take the initiative and enter into agreements with householders, even those initially reluctant to get involved. To achieve that, it is absolutely vital that we have a national scheme. It is no good leaving it to local initiatives. That has achieved nothing over the decades as the problem has beset and trapped local residents.

With a bit of Government pump-priming, we would achieve a private sector solution. What more could the present Government want? I call on Ministers to display some imagination and to give the go-ahead to overcome the long-standing and frustrating problem of unadopted roads. I look forward to an invitation from the Secretary of State for the Environment to discuss with him how to progress my Bill through its later stages in the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Peter Hain, Dr. Kim Howells, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. Alan W. Williams, Mr. Harry Barnes and Mr. Ian McCartney.

UNADOPTED ROADS

Mr. Peter Hain accordingly presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the procedure whereby householders and frontages may seek the making up and adoption of a road by a local authority; to require local authorities to act as guarantors for bank and building society loans taken out by householders and frontagers for the purposes of making up and adoption; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 November and to be printed. [Bill 43.]

## Points of Order

3.39 pm

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A little while ago, on inquiring at the Speaker's Office, I was told that the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill, which is on the Order Paper today, would not be discussed today. I welcome that decision because the Bill was flawed and was not a consolidation measure. However, it is important that the House knows whether it will be taken today. Will you confirm that? Furthermore, if it is proposed to discuss the Bill on another day and not abandon it, will it still be taken through all its stages in one day and, if so, when? Will it be discussed on the Floor of the House? It is unsatisfactory for those of us who were prepared to speak on Second Reading of the Bill later today.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** That matter should be raised at business questions. It is not a matter for the Chair.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During last month's Scottish Question Time, I gave notice that, because of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply that I received from the Secretary of State for Scotland to a question about a referendum on the future government of Scotland, I intended to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House. I was then told by the Clerks that, because that subject was a matter for the Prime Minister, and because the Prime Minister does not answer Adjournment debates, it would not be possible for me to raise the matter on the Adjournment of the House. Given the fact that it is in order to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland questions about a referendum for the future government of Scotland, why is it not also in order to raise that subject in a debate on the Adjournment to be answered by the Secretary of State for Scotland?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I suggest that the hon. Gentleman consults the Table Office.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), I wish to clarify the position regarding the consolidation measures on the Order Paper today. It is important that any adjustments to the Order Paper should not simply be left to the Whip not to move at a given time, especially bearing in mind the fact that the Adjournment debate under item 7 is limited to an hour and a half. That in itself is disgraceful because the two reports of the Select Committee on Members' Interests run to many pages and the Select Committee spent hundreds of hours producing reports. For them to be dismissed in an hour and a half is tantamount to a cover-up by the Government.

If the consolidation Bill is not moved, is it within your jurisdiction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow us to use that time discussing item 7 so that we can spend more time on the reports of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, as they very much deserve?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The House is bound by its resolution of last Friday, when it agreed to discuss that matter for an hour and a half.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and I want to know where you stand on the matter. My hon. Friend found a flaw in the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill. He then did his duty, as he saw fit, and sought advice from the Clerks about the flawed Bill. We have now found that the Bill has been taken off.

**Mr. Joseph Ashton** (Bassetlaw): Was that his mistake?

**Mr. Skinner:** It sounds very much like it. Who is working with whom? My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock should have been allowed to oppose the Bill today. It has given the Government time to try to sort out the problem. Wheels have been working within wheels here. When my hon. Friend and I seek the Clerks' advice, we want to know whether that advice is being given in confidence so that we can get on with the job of opposing the lousy, rotton Tory Government.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that when hon. Members speak to the Clerks, they speak in confidence, which is what happened on this occasion.

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that the House is bound by the timetable motion on the debate on Members' interests passed last Friday, but is there any way to prevent timetable motions from appearing on the Order Paper on Fridays, when not many hon. Members are present? It is particularly unfortunate when there is a minimum of consultation and other hon. Members are not given the opportunity to express their opinions.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It takes only one hon. Member to object.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the Leader of the House be brought here to tell us why the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Bill is not being proceeded with today? It is legitimate to ask why it has been abandoned and whether there has been some misunderstanding.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is a matter for the Government, and no doubt the Minister has taken note.



# Orders of the Day

## Boundary Commissions Bill

*Considered in Committee [Progress, 23 June]*

[MR. GEOFFREY LOFTHOUSE *in the Chair*]

### Clause 3

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN REPORTS

*Amendments made:* No. 11, in page 2, line 31, leave out from 'which' to the end of the line and insert

'at the time of publication are prospective only.

(8) For the purposes of subsection (7) above, a boundary shall be regarded as prospective at any time if, at that time, it is specified in a provision of an Act, Measure of the Northern Ireland Assembly, statutory instrument or statutory rule but the boundary has not yet come into operation.'".'.

No. 12, in line 40, after 'applies', insert '(a)'.

No. 13, in line 44, at end add

'and

(b) a boundary which has not yet come into operation on a particular date and which, apart from this subsection, would not be regarded as prospective on that date shall be so regarded if it is specified in a Bill which, on or before that date, has been read a second time by the House of Commons'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

3.47 pm

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 2, line 44, at end add—

'(4) For the purposes of subsection (7) of section 3 of the 1986 Act (as set out in subsection (1) above) to the report of the Boundary Commission in respect of London constituencies and which is a report to which subsection (2) of section 2 above applies, the Commission may delay submitting its report to the Secretary of State until it is notified as to the boundaries of London boroughs to be in operation until 12th June 2000.'.

This is a probing amendment, designed to consider the problems of local government structure and the absence of any clear sign from the Government about what they want to do in London. The local government structure in London, as in other districts, has a major effect on parliamentary boundaries and the work of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England.

There is a lack of clarity in the Government's approach towards the government of London. It is driven partly by the fact that, ever since the Government's abolition of the Greater London council, they have had no clear idea about what should be done in London. Since then, there has been confusion and difficulty in ascertaining what should be done in London.

There are two specific problems. The first difficulty results from the size of some London boroughs and, particularly, the fact that the electorate, as opposed to the population, in some London boroughs appears to be much smaller than one would expect. Under rule 4 in schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, the boundary commission is told that

"no London borough or any part of a London borough shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other London borough".

London boroughs are ring-fenced in a way that no other local authorities are anywhere else in the country.

Clearly, it was thought at the time—there seems to be some logic in this—that if the borough was meant to be the major service provider, there was something to be said for relating that boundary with a parliamentary constituency so that one Member of Parliament or group of Members of Parliament would represent constituencies within a London borough. However, that creates a twofold problem: first, the size of the borough may be such that the constituency is much smaller than one would expect of an English constituency; and, secondly, especially in London boroughs, where there is likely to be a review of the structure of local government, the work of the boundary commission will be made much more difficult as it will not know what the Government have in mind or what Parliament will enact between now and 1994, when recommendations for London will be complete.

It is perhaps not surprising that none of the Members who were making such a fuss on Second Reading about Scottish constituencies and their size is here today——

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West) *rose*——

**Mr. Darling:** Perhaps one is. If the hon. Gentleman will just hold his horses for a moment I will gladly allow him to intervene later.

Comparisons between some of the London boroughs and Scotland are interesting. The constituency of Surbiton has 42,800 electors. That compares well with Glasgow, Garscadden, which has 42,000. Kingston upon Thames, the Chancellor's constituency, has only 51,500 electors, and Fulham has 52,400. It will be seen that London's constituencies are, by and large, with some exceptions, on the small side, bearing in mind the English quota of 69,000 to which the boundary commission will be working.

If Members who think that Scotland is over-represented look at London they will see that there are some anomalies. I would argue that anomalies in parliamentary boundaries are quite proper because it is right that the boundary commission should take into consideration community ties and the desirability of linking constituencies or boroughs in one parliamentary constituency.

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): Can my hon. Friend solve a problem for me? In the London boroughs of Camden and Westminster, what community of interest can explain dividing one side of a road from the other?

**Mr. Darling:** I do not know whether my hon. Friend has read the report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England No. 627, published in May of this year, but it makes many interesting points—such as the fact that it is not clear why some boundaries run down the middle of streets. Some London boroughs certainly have a specific identity. Boundaries must be drawn somewhere. The report asks where London ought to stop. We who travel in and out of it often wonder where it starts and stops, but for the purposes of drawing up a satisfactory scheme for the government of London the Government will have to decide where London starts and stops. As I say, some boroughs have an identifiable existence and their residents identify with them. There are cases, however, in which it seems a matter of pure accident why the boundary commission of the day chose to make some people residents of one borough and others residents of another.

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): If the hon. Gentleman is so interested in communities of interest in London, can he explain why his party was so keen to stop Streatham rejoining the London borough of Wandsworth, with which it felt a community of interest? The move had the support of the local Conservative party but was rigorously opposed by the Labour party.

**Mr. Darling:** That makes my point. There are parts of London where there is no unanimous voice saying which borough they ought to belong to. Presumably the hon. Gentleman and his party saw some advantage in removing Streatham from the borough it was in; others might have taken a different view.

It does not really matter whether one community or street is in one borough or another. What matters for the purposes of the boundary commission is that it should know what the position is likely to be for the next eight to 10 years. The Boundary Commission for England will have to determine and make recommendations on the parliamentary constituencies in London by 1994 and to comply with rule 4 it must take into consideration the existing London boroughs. If they are about to change to any significant degree, the commission should know that before it determines constituencies that are likely to exist for eight to 12 years, through three Parliaments.

I am willing to concede in advance that the drafting of our amendment may not be perfect in every respect, but the Government should still tell us what they have in mind for London. We know that the Secretary of State for the Environment has in mind a review process for the rest of England that will take some time. The parliamentary answers that we have been given about London are not exactly illuminating.

It would seem that the commission is bound to ponder on whether it can justify recommending that Surbiton, with an electorate of 42,800, should remain a constituency when the electorate of the Isle of Wight exceeds 100,000. It is perhaps inevitable, however, that there will be some disparities. If the Government were to make changes, or if Surbiton were to change in character, it would be useful for the commission, if not for the hon. Member who now represents the constituency, to know the position sooner rather than later.

It is fairly easy to ascertain the size of electorates in London boroughs but it is not altogether clear what the electorates should be. The figures show dramatic changes. There are considerable movements within electorates and I do not know where all the people are going. I accept that in London people move about as they do in other areas, but when we consider the pattern of movements between 1987 and 1992 the changes are startling. During that period the electorate within Camden, as opposed to the population, decreased by 11,000. In Hackney, it decreased by 25,000 and in Lambeth by 11,000. It seems odd that so many people should move. If we take London as a whole, more people have apparently left their boroughs than those who have arrived to live within them.

I would expect to see corresponding increases in population in other parts of England, but they are not apparent. That suggests that not everyone who is entitled to be on the register is on it. I accept that there will be some movement. For example, some people might have opted for Lord Tebbit's bike to seek employment elsewhere. It

*[Mr. Darling]*

seems that yet another reason for delaying examination in London is that the individual registers appear to be inaccurate.

The various changes between 1991 and 1992 were also fairly dramatic. Hackney's electorate decreased by 20,000 while Croydon's increased by 5,000.

We are concerned because the Government seem not to know why these movements are taking place. I listened to the Home Secretary yesterday and he seemed not to care. He said that the answer might be that people are not keen to be on the register. He talked also about people having religious objections to being on it. I cannot believe that 20,000 people in Hackney have suddenly found a religious reason to disappear. The Government, both in the interests of good government and of arranging boundaries that fit the needs of London's population, should be concerned that there appears to be far greater movement than one would expect and that there is no apparent reason for it. There will undoubtedly be movement, as I have said, but it appears that there are more deep-seated reasons for it than normal demographic change.

**Mr. Bowis:** I understand that the reason for the reduced electorate in Hackney is a change in practice by the registration officer. He ceased to register automatically people who had not completed the registration form.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) is raising an important issue in the wrong debate. He is saying that the commission should have the ability to make major borough changes, but it makes it clear in its report that it does not have that discretion. It would be ludicrous, therefore, to wait for the commission to continue to deliberate. The hon. Gentleman should seek on another occasion to give the local government boundary commission new terms of reference. If he took that course, he might ultimately get what he wants.

**Mr. Darling:** We are talking about the parliamentary commission, which bases its recommendations substantially on London boroughs. It is bound to do so because of the rules. If the structure of London boroughs is not clear or is uncertain, or if the basis on which the recommendations of the local government boundary commission that bear on populations are wrong, it follows that the parliamentary commission's findings will be based on a misconception of the true situation. Surely that should concern us all, especially as so many constituencies are, of necessity, represented by London Members.

Many have said that it is high time that the Government accepted the fact that there clearly is a problem. It is obvious that some boroughs are not good at registering their population while others have made a determined effort to go through the registers to see whether people exist. But clearly, if one looks at the figures for all the London boroughs, there are tremendous discrepancies. It may have been more appropriate to raise the matter yesterday—I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was here yesterday—but that is another argument for saying that we have an interest in ensuring that we know how many people live in each borough and how many people are eligible to vote in each borough before we start drawing up parliamentary constituencies.

4 pm

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that recommendations on the drawing up of parliamentary constituencies, certainly in areas where it is obvious that there is a substantial under-registration, would be based on the wrong data? Why should there be any confidence in such recommendations when it is known that the commissioners have said that a certain electorate is living in a constituency which we know is an underestimate of the true figure?

**Mr. Darling:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. Before the review it was rightly complained that parliamentary constituencies are based on electorates that were thought to be accurate in 1976. It is odd that we should now draw up boundaries on the basis of electorates that we know, or have substantial reason to believe, are wrong in 1991. If they are wrong this year, the chances are that, by definition, they will be slightly changed by 1994. If the boundary commission's recommendations are accepted in 1994, it will be the beginning of the next century before we look at the matter again when the position may be very different.

The argument for ensuring that we know the population of a borough is compelling, not just for the sake of representation but for the purpose of calculating what boroughs ought to receive in terms of revenue support.

Another substantial reason for the parliamentary boundary commission delaying its work is the structure of local government in London. As I have said, the Government moved quickly once they were determined that the Greater London council was to be abolished. The GLC certainly had its faults. No one would deny that.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): Name one.

**Mr. Darling:** I was hoping to complete this passage of my speech before my hon. Friend came into the Chamber. However, I am extremely glad to see him for a number of reasons.

The Government were quick to abolish the GLC, but they have been slow to tell us what they want to put in its place. The Government seem to have been more concerned with trying to create a political structure of their own political colour than with providing a structure of government that will efficiently deliver services to the people of London.

London is the only capital city in the world that does not have a strategic planning authority. It is not surprising that people who are not supporters of the Labour party, people who are objective inasmuch as they are not beholden to any political party, have drawn attention to London's problems when its policy is being determined by a number of boroughs without any strategic planning.

I well remember that in 1980 or 1981 the Government pledged to get rid of quangos, which they said had bedevilled the Government. Yet in London, following the abolition of the GLC, quangos are alive and well and flourishing.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, in its report to which I have referred, has drawn attention to some of the problems that it faces. Clearly it can continue its work and make recommendations on the basis of the present London boroughs and the present boundaries, but if the Government are to change the

structure of local government, or if the borough boundaries are to be amalgamated, extended or whatever, the parliamentary boundary commission should take that into account. If it is thought important to link London boroughs and constituencies—clearly it must have been at least as recently as 1986—it follows that the boundary commission should have regard to the boundaries that are likely to be in existence for the next few years.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** It appears that the hon. Gentleman does not want the boundary commission in Wales to take account of intended changes there that are much further down the track—as opposed to changes which might occur in London, but which are not intended because we have no plans to make them. The hon. Gentleman's remarks are inconsistent with those that he made about Wales yesterday.

**Mr. Darling:** There is no inconsistency. Our objection to the situation in Wales is that the Government propose that the boundary commission should have regard to changes debated in the House on Second Reading but which have not received any further consideration. While in general the Bill proposes that the commission should have regard to changes that exist in the form of an Act of Parliament or some other measure, in the case of Wales it is proposed that such changes need only have reached Second Reading stage. It is quite within the contemplation of right hon. and hon. Members that there could be unanimity in all parts of the House that certain changes should not proceed.

We do not object to the commission having regard to changes which have occurred or which are imminent. Our concern is that the commission might proceed in the knowledge that changes might occur when they are at such an early stage, or are so uncertain, that no commission could possibly have regard to them.

The Government have not made clear their position in respect of London. If the Minister is saying that the Government plan to do absolutely nothing, that is an argument for the boundary commission to proceed in the way that the Government want. As I understand it, there may well be changes. The Minister shakes his head. Is the Minister saying that the present situation in Surbiton, for example, is satisfactory and should continue? It is a parliamentary constituency with an electorate of only 42,000, surrounded by much larger constituencies.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** This Minister will say, for the purposes of this intervention, that the hon. Gentleman is confusing the rule in schedule 2 to the 1986 Act, which says that London borough boundaries should not in the normal way be crossed by the boundary commission when recommending boundaries, with the reform of local government structure in London. The two are not the same. All the hon. Gentleman's arguments have been directed at the former, but his amendment is about changes to London local government structure.

**Mr. Darling:** The two are interrelated. I draw the Minister's attention to two written answers. The first, from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), represents the Government's position in the terms that the Minister expressed it:

> "There are no plans to change the general structure of local government in London."—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. *59*.]

The second was given by the same Minister:

> "We have no plans for radical change to the pattern of local government in London."—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. *383*.]

That implies some change. If there are to be changes to the pattern and therefore to boundaries—in the sense that if local government is asked to effect changes, the units thought appropriate to deliver those changes might alter—it would be appropriate for the boundary commission to know about them.

The purpose of this debate is to draw the Government on what they plan to do. The boundary commission's report to which I referred earlier stated:

> "There needs to be a clearer view of the role and functions of local government, both generally and in London, before the existing units can be evaluated and more fundamental decisions made on their boundaries."

That suggests that we ought to know whether or not the Government plan any changes. The Minister appears to indicate that there are to be no changes whatever. I find that surprising, because I believe that changes are expected, and they are bound to have a knock-on effect on boundaries.

This is not just a London point. If the rules in the 1986 Act are to provide for the ring-fencing of London boroughs, the boundary commission must know whether there are to be changes in the boundaries; otherwise, it will proceed on a basis that will not apply in four or five years' time.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): The possible ring-fencing of London borough boundaries is relevant to schedule 2(5) of the 1986 Act. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that, if we take a straight reading of the entitlement of London boroughs—using the information given yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones)—it is clear that the disparity between the population of the largest constituency, which is about 100,000, and that of the smallest, which is 54,000 or 56,000, outweighs almost any other aspect of the legislation?

**Mr. Darling:** I do not have that information before me, but the smallest London constituency has a population of 42,000. I am not sure from where the hon. Gentleman gets his 56,000 figure.

**Mr. Bottomley:** Hammersmith and Fulham is entitled to 1·44 Members of Parliament, and has a voting list of 100,000. Westminster has an entitlement of 1·58—in other words, it is entitled to two Members of Parliament—and an electorate of 109,000 plus the City of London's 4,000. Thus, unless borough boundaries are crossed, each Westminster constituency has an electorate of about 56,000, while Hammersmith and Fulham has an electorate of 100,000. The information can be found in column 7 of written answers in yesterday's *Hansard*.

**Mr. Darling:** I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is arguing that London boroughs should be crossed or that they should not. I believe that he is saying that they should. Certainly, if the position does not change, it is difficult to see how the boundary commission can ignore rule 5 in the schedule to the Act, which relates to excessive disparity, and rule 6, which entitles the commission to cross London boroughs. It did not cross them to any material extent at

*[Mr. Darling]*

the time of the last review. If, however, there are changes in any London boroughs, especially the smaller ones but also the larger ones—the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) is right; the commission must examine the boroughs to assess entitlement to parliamentary constituencies—entitlements may change as well, even if the alterations are not dramatic. The question of registration is also important. If, for instance, Hackney's 20,000 missing voters are actually present, there is bound to be an effect on its entitlement. The hon. Gentleman's intervention has helped my argument, although I can see from his face that that was not his intention.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** On Second Reading, those who criticised the over-representation of urban Scotland pointed out that London was also over-represented, and that it was therefore logical to cross London borough boundaries. The boundary commission has already set a precedent by grouping metropolitan districts to get around the excessive disparities. Surely it is reasonable for it to group two or more London boroughs to avoid such a problem in the capital.

**Mr. Darling:** I am not sure that all Conservative Members took that view, but I know that the hon. Gentleman does, and I do not quarrel with him. It may well be appropriate to cross boroughs in some circumstances.

Amendment No. 8 is designed to draw the Government on their intentions relating to boroughs. The rules come into play only when the boundary commission is faced with a set of boundaries. If there are to be changes, the commission should be aware of them before starting its work. If the rules are to be obtempered, and if the rationale behind the London borough rule in particular has any weight in terms of community and other links, the boundary commission should know where the boundaries are likely to be when it draws up the parliamentary constituencies.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Is not it perfectly clear that the local government boundary commission can make minor tidying proposals, and has done—for example, for the borders between Bromley and Kent and between Croydon and Surrey—but the parliamentary boundary commission can have regard only to what has already happened? Since there are no proposals for major overhaul of the London boroughs, the parliamentary boundary commission must work on the basis of the existing London boroughs, irrespective of whether it crosses borough boundaries.

**Mr. Darling:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but the purpose of the amendment is to probe the Government's intentions. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was present when I said that it was a probing amendment. If the Government say that there will be no change whatsoever, fair enough; the issues will have been canvassed and we can all go home happy that we have done an afternoon's work. But if changes are to be made —even small changes can be substantial—it would be appropriate for the boundary commission to know before it makes its recommendations to the Secretary of State.

4.15 pm

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): Is not the Bill a political hot potato for the Government, because nothing creates greater anger and confusion among electors than people in, for instance, Richmond being claimed by the London borough of Kingston and people in Esher, which is in the district of Elmbridge, also being claimed by the London borough of Kingston? The Conservative party loses votes under such arrangements, as we saw with the London Government Act 1963. Conservative Members are very anxious about the possibility of the same happening now. Hon. Members who are anxious to defend the integrity of the county of Essex are concerned to ensure that the Government fully and frankly disclose their intentions. Many people in the counties surrounding Greater London are deeply concerned about the proposal for local government and parliamentary boundaries. They wish to be in the parliamentary boundary that is coterminous or has a relationship with their district council and local government unit. Above all, most people want to stay in the counties——

**The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a speech.

**Mr. Darling:** It is clear that in the next eight or 12 years the Government will have to turn their attention to what constitutes London and whether the present boroughs are satisfactory. Suggestions will always be made about whether a boundary should be down one street or another. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West said that changes are contemplated all the time. When the Government say that they are not planning anything, it usually means that they are planning something but do not want to say. [Hon. Members: "No."] Our experience over the past 12 years tells us that that is true.

The amendment is a probing amendment designed to draw from the Government their intentions for the local government structure. It is important that the boundary commission knows what the Government plan, otherwise the basis on which it proceeds will be false and the boundaries that it suggests in 1994 may not be appropriate at that time, let alone eight or 12 years thereafter.

I hope that, in reply, the Minister will tell us the Government's intentions. If, as the interventions and grunts from Conservative Members suggest, no changes are to be made, which I find hard to believe, I am sure that the people of London and of its surrounding areas would like to know about it.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said that the local government boundary commission seems to consider constituency boundaries simply on a street-by-street basis, but that has not been my experience. In the past two years, major changes to the boundary between the London boroughs of Ealing and Hillingdon have been suggested. We saw fit to contest those changes strongly and succeeded in having them withdrawn. From the local government point of view, the proposed changes are merely a tidying process, perhaps to move a boundary to a railway line where the railway line is close to the existing boundary. That seems to make good sense, and it is such small, tidying changes which are needed rather than major structural changes.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central rightly said that the smallest London constituency comprises 42,500 people, but not many London constituencies are anywhere near as small as that. In any case, it does not compare with the smallest Scottish constituency of 23,000. As he is making comparisons between Scotland and London, I draw his attention to that fact.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I understand the argument about Scotland, but it is a different matter and, like Wales, involves a different commission. However, can the hon. Gentleman justify the fact that Northampton—I choose that town deliberately, as it has two Conservative seats —has approximately 70,000 or 75,000 electors in each seat, whereas the London borough which was mentioned a moment ago has only 42,000? Is there something special about London, or is it part of England?

**Mr. Greenway:** It is interesting that Labour Members of Parliament argue as they do. I do not remember them arguing against the substantial number of London Members of Parliament when most of them were Labour. Now that 47 of the 84 Greater London Members of Parliament are Conservatives——

**Mr. Bermingham:** We need fewer of them.

**Mr. Greenway:** I hope not, but I was merely saying what crossed my mind when the hon. Gentleman invited me to comment on what he said.

I have heard nothing in today's debate or anywhere else about one of London's particular problems: we are obliged—I am not complaining—to give homes to substantial numbers of asylum seekers. In the past year, in the London borough of Ealing, about 220 housing units, some sizeable, were handed to asylum seekers. I may even be understating the case substantially, but the fact is that a fair number of asylum seekers have been put into leased accommodation, which means that local people who should be on the electoral register are not because they are not living in the units of accommodation which have been passed to the asylum seekers.

As I was saying only this morning to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning, a Member of Parliament is obliged—and, naturally, keen—to provide a service to asylum seekers. I dare say that, like me, many of my hon. Friends find that asylum seekers are keen to use the services of their Member of Parliament. They come to my surgery——

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. What has this to do with the amendment?

**Mr. Greenway:** I am dealing with the numbers game which was a central part of the argument of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, who asked: why had people gone from the register? I am explaining that many of them have disappeared from the register because, at least in my constituency and in Ealing as a whole, many of the housing units have been taken over by asylum seekers who are not registered—*[Interruption.]* Yes, it is a considerable issue.

Another matter about which I expected the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central to be knowledgeable—he probably is—is the fact that, between 1986 and 1996, 1 million fewer people will reach the age of 18. As those over 18 go on to the electoral register, that fall in the population will be reflected there. London has taken a substantial share of that population fall and that has substantially affected the numbers in our constituencies.

I hope that we shall respect the London borough boundaries and not cross them unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so. It is well known that all London boroughs individually seek to create their own identities and that they succeed in doing that. Ealing regards itself as —and is—the queen of the suburbs and is proud of it. People who live in Ealing have their own ethos, just as there is a different ethos across the border in Brent—one only has to go across the border to discover that. If we start crossing borders in redrawing constituency boundaries, we shall introduce a substantial change which will mean that not everyone in London will be well represented.

All London boroughs, like other local authorities, have distinct services, such as the education and youth services. The services in one borough are very different from the services in others. For those and other reasons, I hope that constituency boundaries will continue to be drawn within boroughs, as they have been in the past.

**Mr. Bermingham:** As always, I declare an interest in the subject as a practising lawyer who has been involved in a number of inquiries.

I accept unreservedly that there will be no local government changes in London this side of the year 2000. I see no need for change because the boroughs, as has been said, have their own entities. That view may surprise Conservative Members.

I am concerned about the sense of justice in the country as a whole. I hope that the Home Secretary will find it in his heart this afternoon to be gracious for once and to give way to a fair point. I hope that he will give an undertaking when, no doubt, I persuade my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) to withdraw the amendment in return. The undertaking which I seek relates to paragraph 4(1)(a)(ii) of schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 which deals with the London boroughs. The Home Secretary will recall that the paragraph deals with the question of crossing what I call the "skin" boundaries—the county boundaries.

We know that developments are taking place whereby certain counties are being redefined. I take no issue with that because it is fair and reasonable. Monstrosities such as Avon and Humberside, which were set up in 1984, are silly. Let us have a little bit of sanity. Why, for example, can we not go back to Lancashire? It will happen. Our skin boundary, for the sake of argument, would be Lancashire and within it would be a number of metropolitan district councils. In the redistribution between 1976 and 1983, one of the factors that led to the case of Foot and others *v.* the boundary commissioners was that the law at the time led to differences between the way in which the counties were considered, the way in which the metropolitan districts were considered and the way in which London was considered.

For my own purposes and for the record, I say that if we could have a system of every constituency having the same numbers, all well and good. No one could argue with that. However, I am a realist and I recognise that because a council is built in a series of wards—in some areas there are big wards and in others there are small wards—that is not always practicable. One must be realistic and realise that there will be an area of imbalance between

*[Mr. Bermingham]*

constituencies. Provided that that does not exceed 5 per cent. either way, that is tolerable. It becomes intolerable when the imbalance is more than 5 per cent.

4.30 pm

For the purposes of my argument, I am leaving out Scotland and Wales because they have different commissions and the 1986 Act deals mainly with the English commission. One accepts that the Welsh and Scots will go their own way—I do not mean to be unkind.

In 1983, when we came to consider the matter in some depth, we found an interesting feature. We found that in the interests of achieving parity of number, for example in Tyne and Wear, it was necessary for the boundary to cross the Tyne bridge. I know that yesterday my mathematics were appalling, for which I apologise to the Committee. However, I corrected the figures for *Hansard's* purposes. I said that seven and a half plus three and a half equalled 12. That will undoubtedly bring a smile to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who is an expert in the subject. I got it wrong and I apologise for that.

The point was that by crossing, say, the Leeds-Wakefield boundary, the commission was able to create seats of similar size. Boundaries were crossed in the west midlands, in Dudley; in Greater Manchester, in Rochdale; and in the borough next to Oldham. That was logical because it made it possible to create seats of the same size.

When the skin boundaries come to be drawn for the counties or the new shire counties—leaving aside the future nature of local authorities and whether they will be unitary or otherwise—I hope that the commission will use common sense and try to keep towns in those areas as single units. Of course, that will mean crossing local government borders so that, within the county, seats of comparable size are created, perhaps consisting of part of the metropolitan district and part of the adjacent former county council area. But at least it will be possible to create seats of approximately the same size.

The problem arises with paragraph 4(1) (a) (ii) of the schedule to the 1986 Act. The 1986 Act says bluntly that in London one cannot cross boundaries except for reasons of excessive disparity. How can one cross the border of Surbiton and—if someone will think of the name of a large seat in north London, I shall be grateful because I cannot think of one off the top of my head——

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Brent.

**Mr. Bermingham:** If the hon. Gentleman has a suggestion, I shall give way.

**Mr. Bottomley:** As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) jokes from my side, there are not any large seats in London. The House understands the hon. Gentleman's point. He does the House a service in an additional sense. This is not a party political issue. Whether London is allocated Members of Parliament on the basis of its whole electorate or by adding up bits and pieces from column 7 of *Hansard*, the number comes to 70 or 71 Members. So London loses 13 seats, whatever happens. The question is, what sort of fairness and disparity will there be? Everyone is listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I take his words kindly. He understand the point that I seek to make. The first question is, what is London? Is it the total of all the London boroughs which are known as the London boroughs of—? Once that point is reached, we have the total electorate. When we have the total electorate, we can determine the total entitlement. If the matter is dealt with in that way, we shall avoid the problems of 1983. In 1983, in some London boroughs, a factor of 4·3 or 4·4 meant four seats and, therefore, small seats. In other boroughs, 1·3 meant two seats and, in others, 5·2 or 5·3 meant five seats.

In the rest of England the commission made a fair rule so that, for example, in Northamptonshire—I cannot think of the exact figures; I merely use Northamptonshire as an example—a quota of 8·4 resulted in eight seats, whereas in Leicestershire a quota of 9·5 resulted in 10 seats. In other words, the commission rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. In London it did not do that. It took 0·35 or 0·4 as the cut-off point, thus causing London to become over-represented. That is the root cause of the problem.

Hon. Members have asked whether we shall be able to keep the number of seats down to 651. There is a simple solution. If London is properly represented, with seats that reach the norm for England, the House will not grow. I concede that in some areas in the south the number of electors warrants an increased number of Members of Parliament to represent them. That is fair, as some seats are over-sized.

I cannot foresee a solution to the Isle of Wight problem, as it is illogical to tack part of Hampshire on to it. We shall have to wait for the island to become more popular. I think that it will happen and 'ere long it will reach a population that entitles it to two seats. I hope that the Minister will then decide to take an interim step to create two seats on the island, rather than waiting for another parliamentary boundary review.

I hope that the Home Secretary will be able to say that he understands the argument with regard to London and that, because of the increasing disparity likely to occur between London seats and those in the rest of the country, the time has come to cross London borough boundaries. We are merely asking for London to be treated in the same way as any county. Once that is accepted, the argument is over. This is not a party political matter, as it will be for the commission to decide which boundaries to cross and not for us to decide or even to suggest, and I do not do so today.

If London boundaries are to be considered as a single skin and are to be crossed, it will require a simple amendment to paragraph 4(1)(a)(ii) of the schedule. I suggest that the following wording should be added,

"save as is where necessary to achieve parity with the rest of England"

I am trying to be as succinct as possible and I hope that I have been as fair and non-partisan as I can be. I leave the matter squarely in the Home Secretary's paws. If he wants fairness in the commission and in the Bill, he must treat London the same as the rest of the country.

**Dame Angela Rumbold** (Mitcham and Morden): I listened with great care to the speech of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will reject the amendment, because it is important for London constituencies to be considered in conjunction with the rest

of the parliamentary seats in England, Wales and Scotland before the end of 1994. It would be unparalleled and unfortunate if they were not.

As a London Member, I have great interest in these matters, as do many of my Conservative colleagues. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South said that London constituencies are over-sized and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) pointed out —and received an answer—that London is over-represented in Parliament. That is inescapable. However, the means to overcome that problem must not depend on waiting for some supposed change in local government boundaries or local government reorganisation, as the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) suggested.

As far as I am aware, Sir John Banham's commission is merely considering the possibility of changes to the structures of counties and districts. It is possible that some unitary authorities will be created. In any event, I understand that that does not necessarily apply to London boroughs, since they are unitary authorities and have been for some years. I did not read anything in the Conservative party manifesto during the run-up to the last election to suggest that there will be any other change in local government boundaries or local government in London.

If we are to acquire the right amount of parliamentary representation equitably, within present Greater London boundaries, without over-reaching the county boundaries —apart from any marginal changes that may be suggested by the local government boundary commission—it seems right that the boundary commission might decide to cross boundaries; or the commission might decide to link two slender boroughs, which do not warrant two Members of Parliament each, to create three constituencies.

Let us consider the smallest constituencies. I do not know which ones will be chosen, but from the written answer in column 7 in *Hansard* of 22 June to my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) I see that the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea has an electorate of 84,700. That seems to be close to the number necessary for one parliamentary seat. If it is linked with one of the boroughs close by—I know not which—it may be possible to find a rationale for those two small boroughs to have three seats rather than four. It is along those lines that I urge the Minister to consider whether the boundary commission should or should not transgress borough boundaries in order to make common sense and rationality out of what many people see as the unsatisfactory position in London.

Like some of my hon. Friends, I will regret the passing of some of the seats in London. Traditionally, some helped to give the Conservative party, rather than the Labour party, a majority in London. However, having considered the position in London, I accept that it is manifestly unfair that some constituencies are made up of many electors while others are not.

I also seek some reassurance from my colleagues on the Front Bench that they are not considering any reorganisation that will create a superstructure for the government of London. I warn them, straightaway, that I should be opposed root and branch to that.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** In some ways, I feel that we have been here before—both yesterday and on Second Reading. I wish to respond to some of the issues which have been raised today.

The consensus between the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and those Conservative Members who have contributed to the debate was heartening. The hon. Gentleman hit the nail on the head. Happily, the Isle of Wight, which is the great exception to the rule, is acceptable as a constituency to those who live there. They did not respond to the provisional recommendation that the Isle of Wight should have two constituencies. Therefore, they seem to be content to be under-represented at the moment, no doubt in the sure and certain knowledge that the Isle of Wight will have two constituencies in due course.

I take issue with a point made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). He seemed to suggest that a road that had one borough on one side and another borough on the other would inevitably create anomalies, but that one could somehow do something about that. It is inevitable that there will always be areas in which the border between urban authorities is a road and not something more significant, such as a river, railway line or canal. If that were not so, we would have enormous local authorities. For example, the local authority for London would cover not only Greater London, but large parts of the surrounding non-metropolitan counties. The city of Glasgow would have to include all its suburbs, too, because it is a continuous built-up mass.

**Mr. Darling:** I can save the hon. Gentleman some time. That was not my argument. I agree with the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who pointed out that some of the boundaries are odd and that there is no rhyme or reason for them. However, there is no way around the problem. According to the boundaries proposed by the last boundary commission review, my constituency is circumscribed because the residents parking scheme for Edinburgh stretches into one part of it, but not into another. That may be an anomaly, but I do not know what can be done about it. I accept that that is so.

**Mr. Jones:** We have common ground on yet another point, which is excellent.

The problem in London has become more acute in recent years because of the stair-stepping effect. When the number of seats in a London borough was reduced from five to four or from four to three, the problem was less difficult to overcome. In an extreme case, in which a London borough was theoretically entitled to 4·5 seats but actually had four, the average constituency size would be only 12 per cent. above the national average. If the number of seats in a borough were reduced from four to three, the maximum discrepancy in constituency size would be 17 per cent. If the number of seats in a borough were reduced from three to two seats, the discrepancy would be 25 per cent. If the reduction were from two seats to one, it would be 50 per cent. It is because of the stair-stepping effect that the proposed constituencies for London must cross borough boundaries.

4.45 pm

The precedent has been set in the metropolitan districts and it works perfectly well. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who is no longer present, argued that it would be desirable if parliamentary boundaries and local authorities were contiguous units. That is simply not possible. In the non-metropolitan counties, it is quite common for Members to represent parts of more than one district authority. For example, in

my neighbouring constituency, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) represents part of the Three Rivers district council, the whole of the borough of Watford and part of the city of St. Albans. Such boundaries are set to ensure that there is the right number of electors in each non-metropolitan district.

Until now, the only anomaly has been London. The logic of the figures, which show that the electorate in London has declined over a long period, means that, for reasons of fairness, that nettle has to be grasped by the boundary commission. Otherwise, we will have an increasing number of Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and the areas outside London, whose population is growing, will be treated unfairly.

**Mr. Ken Livingstone** (Brent, East): I support the amendment.

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): The hon. Gentleman has not been present for the debate so how does he know?

**Mr. Livingstone:** I can read the amendment, but I doubt if the arguments of Conservative Members would have swayed me very much, given the appalling and, I think, corrupt approach of the boundary commission to London over the years.

I have never had the slightest doubt that the boundary commission shows a small and significant bias in favour of the Conservative party. That is manifest because, whenever a boundary review is completed, one always finds such a bias. We saw that in 1950 and 1951 when it was much easier to elect Conservative Members of Parliament than Labour Members of Parliament. In 1951, the Labour Government were defeated, although they had won more votes than the Conservative party, because the boundaries had been drawn in a subtle way to benefit the Conservatives.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** *rose*——

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford) *rose*——

**Mr. Livingstone:** I shall not give way until I have made my argument.

The same thing has happened with each significant boundary review. After each of them, there has been a small bias in favour of the Conservative party.

**Mr. Burns** *rose*——

**Mr. Livingstone:** I shall give way once I have completed my argument. I advise hon. Members not to object to my argument until they have heard it.

After the votes are counted at each election, psephologists have demonstrated that were the Labour and Conservative parties to receive an equal number of votes, the Conservatives would usually enjoy an advantage of 10 to 20 in the number of seats won. That advantage tends to be eroded during the lifetime of the boundaries as population change takes place, but every parliamentary boundary review has had an in-built bias towards the Tory party.

I had the misfortune to attend one of the reviews in London during the last round. It was for the constituency of Hampstead and Highgate and was an absolute travesty, showing great prejudice. The constituency had been bitterly fought over, and it once returned a Labour Member of Parliament. We saw in that boundary review a complete ignoring of natural communities in order to preserve a seat for the Conservative party. In the long term, it did not work, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) demonstrates that fact. In Camden, before the review came into operation in 1983, we had three constituencies which, it was proposed, should become two. The choice before the boundary commission concerned what part of the old St. Pancras, North seat should be included in Hampstead.

There were two proposals, one from the local Conservative party, arguing that Highgate should be included. That proposal overlooked the fact that no road joined the Highgate ward in St. Pancras, North with the Camden constituency. Unless one trekked over the heath —quite a trek—one had to go out of the Highgate ward, through Haringey and back into Camden to find a road that would convey one from one side of the constituency to the other. It was absolute nonsense.

The alternative, put forward by the Labour party, was that the two wards of Gospel Oak and Grafton, which abutted the South End ward—it was one natural community but was divided for years—should be included. That would have made a clear and concise boundary created by a railway line. There could have been no doubt on the part of anyone listening to the hearing on that boundary review that the obvious and sensible natural community would be achieved by the creation of a Hampstead seat which included Gospel Oak and Grafton. Highgate was included for no reason other than the fact that Gospel Oak and Grafton were safe Labour wards, whereas Highgate ward normally returned a Conservative.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** I read the report on that occasion. The boundary commission made it clear that it thought that there was merit in bringing together the two sides of Hampstead heath, which would have meant the least disruption to existing constituencies, that always being one of the commission's principles. There seems to be a clear communality of interest between those who look to the heath from one side and those who look from the other. For the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the commission acted out of political motivation is a travesty of justice and, even with his standards, he should know better than to suggest that.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To define a constituency by being on opposite sides of an open space, one of the largest open spaces in London, seems to be a wonderfully new concept. That does not apply anywhere else in London. But it made all the difference to a seat that Labour would have been more likely to win.

**Mr. Burns:** The hon. Gentleman sauntered in half way through the debate and then made outrageous allegations about the boundary commission. I fear that, because he was so late coming in, he missed the tabloid press reporters in the Press Gallery.

The hon. Gentleman alleged that, following a boundary commission review, there will be at the next general election an inbuilt bias of 10 to 20 seats in favour of the Conservative party. Does he have any positive proof to back up his allegation? How does he reconcile it with the fact that, prior to the February 1974 election, the press having made that allegation, as press cuttings——

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. The hon. Member's intervention is becoming very long. Interventions must be brief.

**Mr. Livingstone:** February 1974 was not the natural next election. Those boundaries should have come into operation at the 1970 general election, but we remember why the then Labour Government decided to put off the alterations, by which time the natural bias of which I spoke had started to erode. If those boundaries had operated in the 1970 election—*[Interruption.]* I refer Conservative Members to the analysis made by *The Economist* and published as a separate booklet in late July 1970. That made it clear that that inbuilt bias was there at that stage.

There would have been a Conservative Government in February 1974 but for the split with the Ulster Unionists. That allowed Labour to win more seats because in every previous election the 11 Ulster Unionist seats would have been counted with the Conservative seats.

**Mr. Bermingham:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that a major problem has been the fact that, in every redistribution since 1951, there has been a growing disparity in the average size of London seats compared with seats in the country as a whole? That has given a flavour of there being a Conservative bias. The bias has appeared to benefit the Conservative party simply because London has too many seats. Further, the hon. Gentleman must remember——

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. I draw the attention of the hon. Member and the Committee to the fact that we are discussing London boroughs in the year 2000, not what the situation is now or in the past.

**Mr. Bermingham:** On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. How on earth can we discuss the future without referring to the present and the past? The future is built on the present and the past.

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. I urge hon. Members to have a good try.

**Mr. Livingstone:** My worry is that the boundary commission is planning to take the same corrupt approach to boundaries in London—*[Interruption.]*—in the coming redistribution—

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it in order for an hon. Member to suggest that the boundary commissioners are corrupt?

**The First Deputy Chairman:** That is a matter for the hon. Member concerned to decide.

**Mr. Bottomley:** It is disgraceful.

**Mr. Livingstone:** Not at all. I have a lot more evidence about the corruption of the boundary commission, and it is what one would expect. I am not saying that it is blatant. Corruption in Britain is usually rather subtle. I am referring to a small bias, with a decision here or there, carefully moved the Conservative party's way, and I have drawn attention to what happened in Hampstead——

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. I suggest that the hon. Member return to the subject of the amendment.

**Mr. Livingstone:** I return to the specific point of London and the borough boundaries. We have seen already the approach of the boundary commission. In 1993, London should have lost four more seats than it actually lost, the point that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) made, for too many seats have been given to London. Some people in London greeted that as a sign of generosity on the part of the boundary commission. When one examines which four boroughs were the beneficiaries of the extra four seats, one discovers that they maintained four Conservative seats in London.

**Mr. Bowis:** Including Newham.

**Mr. Livingstone:** No, not Newham. The four boroughs that were allowed to keep an extra seat—which, if the formula had been applied accurately, they would not—were Bromley, Barnet, Bexley and Greenwich, with the result that in each borough the Conservatives retained a seat that they would otherwise have lost. If that is not biased, I do not know what is, and it has started again. A local government boundary review is being carried out in London and it is expected that the changes to be made will provide the basis for the parliamentary boundary commission's findings—the point made in the amendment.

**Mr. John Gorst** (Hendon, North): As the hon. Gentleman's objective is to win seats, may I put it to him that he would be more effective if, instead of traducing the boundary commission, he seduced the electorate? That has been his great failing so far.

**Mr. Livingstone:** I have no intention of seducing anybody in the Chamber. A series of boundary reviews of the boroughs is occurring, and the parliamentary boundary commission faces a problem. If it reduces the London seats to exactly the number that the area should have in relation to its population, the majority of seats lost would be Conservative seats. Many Tory boroughs which, unjustifiably, held on to their seats at the last redistribution—*[Interruption.]* The majority of seats to be lost in London will be Conservative seats.

The parliamentary boundary commission has started to change borough boundaries to try to reduce that impact. Brent is a borough from which, with the best will in the world, my party would have trouble dislodging the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). Equally, it would not be easy for the Conservative party to win either of the other two Labour seats in Brent. Although the boundary commission's attitude is to reduce Brent to two seats, the population figures do not justify that. Unless the boundary of the borough is changed, Brent will continue to have three parliamentary seats: two Labour and one Conservative. So the parliamentary boundary commission has approached—informally, of course—the local government boundary commission and asked it to reduce the population of Brent sufficiently so that it will lose a parliamentary seat. That is what I call corruption.

I received an anonymous telephone call from a worker inside the local government boundary commission tipping me off about the fact that the commission had been asked to reduce the size of Brent to two parliamentary seats. When that redistribution takes place, the Brent, North seat would remain Conservative and Labour would lose one of the other two seats. Thus, the bias of the boundary commission is revealed once again.

5 pm

The boundary commission set about its task by suddenly publishing a proposal to remove the safest Labour ward from my constituency and move it to Westminster, North. That act was not received enthusiastically by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), as the ward concerned has about

5 per cent. Conservative voters. There was a huge public outcry. Tenants did not want to be moved around at the whim of the local government and parliamentary boundary commissions and the commissions were forced to back down. However, they did not do so all the way but allowed the bulk of the estate to remain in Brent, shaving off bits of Brent all around—a small part from Brent, North; more from Brent, South; and some more from Brent, East. It is a wonder to behold because they have taken just enough to bring us below the point where we qualify for three seats. That is corruption.

A remarkable coincidence is that, in a borough where nobody has been arguing to change the borough boundary, the commission has changed virtually the entire borough boundary to try to reduce the population to the magic figure where we no longer qualify for three seats. It is down to within about 150 votes of it.

**Mr. Bowis:** The hon. Gentleman seems to be putting over his persecution complex, but little else. If what he says were true, why on earth would he want to support an amendment that delays changing the parliamentary boundaries until the local government boundary commission has brought in its new proposals?

**Mr. Livingstone:** I am telling the House what has happened and what I have seen with my own eyes when those normally Conservative barristers conduct the reviews. Sadly, that is part of the problem. I realise that not every barrister is a Conservative—some of my best friends are barristers—but on any law of averages, if we rely on lawyers to conduct matters, we shall rely on people with no sympathy for the Labour party. The attack on Brent is bad. I oppose it not just on the ground that it will damage the Labour and Tory parties but because it is bad to sit down and ask, "How do we draw up the boundaries in London to benefit the Conservative party?", which is clearly what has been happening for years. We should ask how best we can benefit the people of London.

If we reduce Brent to two very large seats, we shall create seats with enormous numbers of problems to be represented by just two Members of Parliament. Each year, I handle some 4,000 constituency problems and my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) does exactly the same. If we fuse the bulk of those two seats together, we shall create a seat which it is almost impossible for one Member to serve, unless the House of Commons gives those Labour Members who represent hard-pressed inner-city areas extra parliamentary support and research facilities.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** I am glad that my hon. Friend has mentioned that point because I raised precisely the same one yesterday on a previous amendment. If the boundary commissioners can take into account the geography of constituencies in rural areas and decide not to apply the quota, why cannot there be similar criteria for urban seats, such as those which my hon. Friend and I represent? As I said yesterday, with 42,000 constituents in my borough, I have two or three times the weight of problems of Tory Members in rural areas with 90,000 constituents. No acknowledgement is made of that in this place. Perhaps the boundary commissioner should be allowed to recognise it.

**Mr. Livingstone:** Clearly, boundary commissioners cannot advise Parliament about the services and support provided to Members, but they should take account of the fact that, when they carve up boundaries, they create an intolerable concentration of problems in a small number of seats that are far too large. If, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, we are in a position to make special exemptions for seats that cover large areas with a distant and spread population, why cannot we do the same in areas of London with massive concentrations of social problems? It shows that the boundary commission does not give a damn about the service provided to constituents caused by concentrating problems in a small number of parliamentary seats.

I hope that the amendment will be successful because I have not the slightest doubt that, were we not under the pressure of a parliamentary boundary review, the local government boundary commission would not have started fiddling with virtually every yard of the boundary of the borough of Brent, moving people backwards and forwards to remove one seat from Brent.

Another option was suggested. Westminster council, which is not normally a fan of mine—I do not normally agree with those people and consider them little better than grave robbers—came up with a proposal for the boundary commission to move a part of Westminster, North into my constituency. That was just waved aside because it would have made it impossible to get rid of one of the seats in Brent.

Let us not continue to pretend that this is an academic exercise. It is about a biased parliamentary boundary commission. Its bias is not overwhelming but is just enough to make the difference in a tight election. It is using that bias against the people of Brent and intervening for political reasons, ignoring natural communities and the vast burden of problems that exist in those areas. As a result, it is giving them far too few Members of Parliament. I was tipped off about that by someone working for the local government boundary commission, who said that a request had been received from the parliamentary boundary commission to reduce the size of Brent. That has been done to within 150 votes. The four additional Tory seats that were retained in London last time were not justified on the basis of population. They were given not to the areas with the greatest number of social problems but to areas on the periphery with nothing like that scale of problem.

Given the blatant fiddle which I have witnessed to prevent Hampstead becoming a much more winnable seat for Labour and creating an artificial constituency on two sides of Hampstead heath, and now the perverse fiddle of the boundaries of Brent, the time has come to do away with the parliamentary boundary commission. It would be much more honest if the House debated the matter, recognising that we are discussing the pursuit of power by a party that makes certain that the people conducting those reviews are largely its friends. They are people whom Conservative Members have met and with whom they have practised law decade after decade, and they are doing the business for the Tory party.

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): I have no intention of supporting the amendment because it simply tries to put off decisions further. Nor do I propose to follow the example of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who seems to be playing a rent-a-quote tendency by maligning the boundary commissioners.

I wish to raise a subject that I raised on Second Reading with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home

Secretary. It must be considered on the basis of the totality of London and the outer London boundary. The issue was raised by the local government commissioners in their overview which was produced in the middle of May. I forget the number of the document, but I am sure that the Ministers will know it.

The local government commissioners stressed the point that the Greater London boundary is now out of date and has been overtaken by the development of communities around the outskirts of London. The borough of Kingston, which I represent, is one such example. Kingston has spread from the township of Kingston, over the Greater London boundary into Surrey, and now the community of Kingston, with Long Ditton, Thames Ditton, Hinchley Wood and Claygate—all four form part of the borough of Elmbridge—are cohesive parts of the community that surrounds Kingston.

In the light of that development, three years ago the officers of Kingston council presented the local government boundary commission with facts and statistics to show the way in which development had taken place and the boundary had been overtaken. The local government boundary commissioners have accepted the points raised. In their overview they stated that, although they believed that they were not empowered to make considerable changes in their recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, the points raised should be considered in the near future.

When will the boundary commission take into consideration the development which has created a community that now spreads over what we knew as the Greater London boundary before the Greater London council was abolished? There is no question but that that has also happened in other districts around the periphery of London, and it must surely be taken into account, or there will be confusion. As I have a constituency which touches on that district, I should be told what sort of steer can be given to the boundary commission. Should it consider those matters now, or should we continue in confusion for a number of years? I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he will state that the parliamentary boundary commission will look seriously at the views expressed in the recent report of the local government boundary commission.

5.15 pm

**Mr. Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich): Any hon. Member who represents a London constituency—I am fortunate enough to have represented two London constituencies —will be well aware of the anomalies and problems and the need for a thorough review of the London boundaries. The facts are clear. We are conscious of the extent to which the majority of London constituencies fall below the numerical quota. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) rightly said, the caseload of most London Members is substantially greater than that of hon. Members for other parts of the country, which compensates for the smaller populations.

We are conscious that the boundaries in London are often a historic feature, inherited over a long period, and do not always follow a logical pattern—they are there because they are there. When I first reviewed the constituency boundary and considered the western edge of Greenwich and its boundary with Lewisham, East and Deptford, I found it difficult to understand the logic. I was advised by someone who was in a better position than I to know the facts that the boundary was decided in the 1860s. I hesitate to use the word "gerrymandered" as the seat was then represented by William Ewart Gladstone, who I am sure would have regarded that as improper. However, I am assured that the boundary was adjusted in the interests of the Liberals at that time. It is a curious boundary, and there is no question about the need for a review and an adjustment. The boundary commission has been taking that entirely proper approach to the western boundary of the Greenwich parliamentary constituency and the Greenwich boroughs.

I and other London Members are concerned at the risk inherent in the ad hoc approach taken to the redefinition of London boundaries. That is evidenced in the way in which the possibility of constituencies crossing borough boundaries is not being debated from first principles. Discussion is not centring on what is right in terms of the relationship between the parliamentary constituency and the borough boundary—there is a strong argument for making a link between the two and preventing parliamentary constituencies from crossing borough boundaries.

The case is clear, but it is not being argued on its merits. It is being considered purely in terms of how to cope with boroughs such as Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham where the populations are falling drastically. Ad hoc decisions are being taken to try to avoid either creating a single constituency which represents about 100,000 people or, at the other extreme, maintaining two constituencies of only about 50,000 people. The issue of constituencies crossing borough boundaries is being considered, not from first principles, but on an ad hoc basis in an attempt to cobble together the best solution out of the current unsatisfactory framework.

Having looked at the report of the local government boundary commission I feel more worried about our proceeding within a tight timetable in which decisions will be prompted by the need for quick decisions rather than by the need to take a broad, strategic view of the appropriate boundaries for London as a whole, and the relationship between those borough boundaries and constituency boundaries. Let us consider how we would approach the problem if we were starting from first principles.

As the local government boundary commission stressed in its report, one would consider the boundaries of outer London and the limits of the metropolitan district. One would start—as it did—by identifying the existing problems. The present boundaries were defined long before the definition of current usages and other development patterns were clear. The report states:

> "Many of the boundaries pre-date the establishment of London in its present form, and were not amended to follow modern features when the Greater London Council was created. More recent years have seen the construction of the M25 and associated development on the edge of London."

Those developments were not taken into account when the boundaries were drawn up.

It is hardly surprising that the report, published just a month ago, should end with a clear steer. It recognises that more radical action is needed than the commission has been able to recommend because of its limited remit. That is true not just in south-east London, about which I am concerned, but, as the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) highlighted, the same applies in south-west London. Those boundaries, and the definition of London

*[Mr. Nick Raynsford]*

boroughs and their surrounding districts, needs a more strategic review than was possible given the remit of the local government boundary commission.

Having considered the total exterior London boundary, I shall consider the boundaries of individual boroughs, where similar considerations apply. The report of the boundary commission makes it clear that there are wide variations and anomalies in the size of boroughs, which range from 118,000 to 258,000 residents in inner London and from 136,000 to 318,000 in outer London.

The report makes the following important point:

"There seems to be no clear rationale for the present number and size of the existing boroughs. The present arrangements for London government seem to be a compromise between two types of authority—on the one hand the boroughs are not truly strategic, while on the other hand they seem too large to represent local community loyalties given that there has been no provision for parishes in Greater London."

Many of us working in inner-London areas know the strong sense of attachment that people still feel to their local communities and the sense of loss deriving from the fact that the local government boundaries introduced in the 1960s no longer allowed them the same sense of proximity and contact with their local authority. I frequently encounter people who feel that since the larger London borough of Greenwich was brought into existence, embracing Woolwich and Eltham, those in the former metropolitan area of Greenwich find the town hall now located in Woolwich more remote and do not enjoy the same degree of contact with it.

The boundary commission clearly hints that, despite its remit, it would have liked to deal with the issue more broadly and strategically and to consider the right local authority size, role and functions. Those difficult issues are not being properly considered, but they should be.

I am interested in the factors which relate to the boundaries of the borough of Greenwich. An important recommendation in the provisional boundary commission report suggests that the community of Thamesmead should be united with the borough, on the principle that communities should not generally be divided across boundaries. The recommendation makes a great deal of sense, but for a variety of reasons there was some local opposition to it. I suspect that there is a great deal of conservatism among electorates and a reluctance to move from one borough to another which can easily be stirred up by people who do not want boundaries to be rationalised. I hope that the logic of the recommendation will be reinforced when the boundary commission report finally appears. The whole of Thamesmead should be brought inside the borough boundary—a sensible arrangement.

**Mr. David Evennett** (Erith and Crayford): As the Member whose borough covers Thamesmead, may I point out that the hon. Gentleman is overlooking the voice of the people? Conservative Members believe in what the people want, not in what looks good on a map or in what the bureaucrats may think is a good idea—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Newham, West (Mr. Banks) is always vocal on these issues, but we are not discussing his part of London.

The people of Thamesmead made their voice clear in a referendum: they do not want to be part of Greenwich. I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman does not believe in listening to them.

**Mr. Raynsford:** On the contrary, listening to the people is an important exercise, but one should not be misled into thinking that a view held at one time is final or decisive. Electorates change their minds; temporary factors may influence their decisions. That is why these issues should be dealt with in broad strategic terms, not in an ad hoc way. The poll tax, for instance, may at a given moment influence people to express a preference in a certain direction, but far more fundamental issues are at stake.

If the recommendation is confirmed and Thamesmead is united with Greenwich, that will influence the size of the borough and hence the number of constituencies. Other factors not relevant to the amendment also come into play —the extent to which the register is accurate, for example. There is a great deal of evidence that it is not. Future development proposals are germane to my constituency as well. The proposals for the development of the Greenwich peninsula are stalled because of the hiatus over the Jubilee line—a hiatus for which Conservative Members have a considerable responsibility. The key point is the need to avoid a rushed decision leading to ad hoc conclusions and unsatisfactory short-term answers. There should be a much broader long-term review of boundaries.

All the factors that I have mentioned suggest the case for a more rational and strategic approach than is likely to be adopted if the process is rushed. The amendment would allow the boundary commission to act on wider considerations, to take a broader view and to bear in mind long-term aspects. There is thus a great deal of merit in it. I ask the Committee to support it.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said, amendment No. 8 is a probing amendment designed to elicit from the Government their intentions in respect of London. I have heard hon. Members mutter from sedentary positions that there is no intention to change borough boundaries or the local government structure of London, but that view is not universally held in the Conservative party or in the Government—nor will it hold for the foreseeable future.

During the general election campaign, Ministers made a number of statements about the future local government structure of London. The then chairman of the Conservative party, Governor Chris Patten as we must now call him, said that there would be something in the Conservative manifesto on the subject. He hinted as much in an interview carried by the *Evening Standard*.

Then there was a proposal by the President of the Board of Trade—I believe he wants to be called El Cid —to the effect that he was in favour of directly elected mayors for London. There have been proposals to set up a new London forum made up of appointed business men —I stress the word "men". Lady Shirley Porter has suggested a Minister for London and a look at the question of London's boroughs. Clearly, a great deal is going on in the Conservative party.

The state of flux in London is brought about by the uncertainty arising from the abolition of the Greater London council. It is hardly surprising that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central should move

an amendment suggesting that the boundary commissioners take that state of flux into account. We want to get it right this time.

Conservative Members say that my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and I have an axe to grind about the GLC, and we certainly have—we were both on it when it was abolished. But I believe in the old political dictum, "Don't get mad, get even," and that is what we intend to do—eventually. Unfortunately, we shall have to wait another four years before doing so.

The Confederation of British Industry, the London chamber of commerce, the London advisory planning committee and anyone else who takes a logical, disinterested and dispassionate look at London and the way it is governed—I exclude the political hacks on the Conservative Benches——

**Mr. Wilshire:** Come off it.

**Mr. Banks:** We all know why the GLC was abolished: it was because that mad fool, that loony half-mad cretin, the former Prime Minister—I trust that I am not being unparliamentary in thus describing her—decided to abolish it. That was no way to deal with London.

Tomorrow morning I shall be on my way to Vilnius in Lithuania because I have been asked by the Council of Europe to look into whether that country is a fit and proper country to join the democratic family of nations in the Council of Europe. One of the problems put to me concerned the Lithuanian Government's disbanding of the Polish and Russian councils in the country. Apparently that is a threat to democarcy. It is easy for us to say that something should not have been done, but we have a Government——

5.30 pm

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. The hon. Member's remarks are interesting, but he should relate them more closely to the amendment.

**Mr. Banks:** I was about to do so when you intervened, Mr. Lofthouse. I was not setting out my itinerary merely for the sake of it. I was about to contend that what has happened in London with the abolition of the GLC is no worse and no better than what the Lithuanian Government have done. Indeed, that Government had excuses for what they did. After all, their country has only recently emerged from 50 years of Soviet domination. I see much similarity between the totalitarianism and the Stalinism that existed in the Soviet Union and that which was perpetrated on the United Kingdom by Mrs. Thatcher, or Lady Barking, as I understand she is to be called, when she takes up her new position in the other place.

Uncertainty has been created in London by the abolition of the GLC, and that is not surprising. You might have guessed, Mr. Lofthouse, that I am biased.

**Dame Angela Rumbold:** Never.

**Mr. Banks:** I admit to a certain tinge of bias when it comes to the GLC. Certain views have been expressed, however, by various bodies and if I am biased so are they. For example, in report No. 627 the boundary commission expressed several concerns about the structure of local government when setting out its conclusions. The commission stated:

> "The pattern of administration covering any one part of the capital is now so complicated, with many joint arrangements and functions taken on by both local government and non-local government bodies, that it is difficult to see how accountability could be improved without a fundamental reappraisal of the role of the borough in London's government."

Has the Minister paid any attention to that which is stated in the commission's report? Are the Government taking no account of the views that the commission expresses? If the Government are not listening to the views of electoral commissioners, are they similarly not listening to what is said by the local government boundary commission? These are things that we need to know. The commissioners need to know because they do not want to waste their time producing reports that the Government trash.

The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) represents an even smaller electorate than mine—so if I go, so does he. Many would say that the House of Commons would be well rid of us both. The hon. Gentleman said that there is confusion about what is London and what is the Greater London area, and that is precisely what the commission has said. There is uncertainty.

We should not be considering these issues in a piecemeal, party-political, partisan way. The way in which Mrs. Thatcher scrapped the GLC was undemocratic. I take as an example the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who I know is a big man in terms of his heart and his conscience. If he were strictly honest with us, as he is from time to time, he would admit that Mrs. Thatcher's approach was not the way to deal with London's local government structure.

It was possible to present a case—my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East did so—for the abolition of the GLC. I disagreed violently with my hon. Friend at the time and the issue remains a bone of contention between us. Similarly, arguments could be advanced now for changing borough boundaries and the strategic government of London, but they should be presented only after calculated consideration by the parties following the findings of a Royal Commission, for example. Instead, Mrs. Thatcher wrote on the back of an envelope, "Scrap the GLC." She did so because she happened not to like my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East, myself, other members of the GLC and what the GLC was doing. That is not the way to treat local government structures.

If Conservative Members were truly democratic—I doubt whether there is any more than a thin veneer of democracy within the Conservative party—I believe that they would agree with me, but Conservative Members will go along with democracy so long as it serves their interests. As soon as it appears to go against those interests, democracy goes out of the window.

**Mr. Bowis:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene to show the Committee my big heart and to say how much we shall miss him when his constituency disappears. Does he understand, however, that the measure that we are discussing has nothing to do with the reform of London's local government but everything to do with boundary proposals? We can return another day to consider boundary changes in London. Of course, I do not want to spoil the hon. Gentleman's speech.

**The First Deputy Chairman:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for trying to do my job, but I am capable of doing it myself.

**Mr. Banks:** Thank you, Mr. Lofthouse. I am capable of looking after myself, but I welcome what you say. I am speaking to the amendment, which seeks to make it clear that the commission may delay submitting its report to the Secretary of State until it is notified of the boundaries in London which are to be in operation until 12 June of the year 2000. As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central said, it is a probing amendment. I have probed the hon. Member for Battersea—metaphorically, not literally, as he well knows—and he has been found wanting.

We are talking about London boundaries, and I do not really mind if borough boundaries are crossed. I accept that that might be necessary. I do not like the idea, but many of my hon. Friends say that if borough boundaries are crossed outside London there is no reason why they cannot be crossed inside the capital. I would not like it to happen in the context of trying to fix parliamentary constituencies. In other words, I would wish there to be more discussion. The crossing of boundaries causes confusion and I would not want to represent a community which straddled a borough boundary. The crossing of boundaries takes away the community element that we like to have in the relationship between Members and their constituents.

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South): I tend to agree with what the hon. Gentleman has just said. It might be interesting to know whether the hon. Gentleman agrees with the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) —I apologise for stemming his torrent of words—that the commissioners are "corrupt". If he agrees with that assertion, can it be backed with some evidence?

**Mr. Banks:** I did not make the assertion. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East is capable of looking after himself and substantiating his allegations. I know that he felt strongly about the matter and believed what he said to be true. If an hon. Member feels something to be true, he has the privilege of being able to speak his mind without fear or favour.

It is not necessary to believe in fifth-form conspiracy theories when we consider the role of the commissioners, but I believe that they very much share the Government's outlook. I would think that they are all part of the club. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East has said, conspiracy and corruption within our society is subtle. We do not have the open corruption that is to be found in other countries. Those who are involved here are far more subtle than that. The British ruling class has had so many generations of manipulating our society that it does not have to do it in an open and obvious way. Instead, it uses subtlety. Members of that class share the same value system. They went to the same schools, they are in the same chambers, and they are members of the same lodges. They go to the same clubs.

**Mr. Livingstone:** They go to bed with one another.

**Mr. Banks:** As my hon. Friend says, they go to bed with one another.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I thought that the chairman of the boundary commission was the Speaker of the day of this honourable House. Surely it is not possible to accuse the commission of being corrupt in any way without making the same accusation against its chairman. It is about time Labour Members stopped slurring past Speakers and the present Speaker.

**The First Deputy Chairman:** The hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) has been treating the Committee to one of his humorous performances. If that has resulted in any stain on Madam Speaker, I am sure that he would wish to withdraw.

**Mr. Livingstone:** On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I referred mainly to the barristers who conduct the inquiry. I cast no aspersion on Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Banks:** I, too, was referring to the barristers, Mr. Lofthouse. Let us get that clear.

**Mr. Porter:** Further to the points of order, Mr. Lofthouse. If it is clear that Members of the House of Commons have gone insane, is there a method by which they can be stopped from speaking?

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. I shall leave the hon. Gentleman to decide that.

**Mr. Banks:** I can assist the hon. Gentleman. We were talking about Madam Speaker, and under the mental health legislation the Speaker has the right to section any Member. Conservative Members should contemplate that carefully before making any further speeches.

Let me pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) before he disappeared out of the Chamber after being unable to obtain any reaction to his last denunciation of my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East. No doubt he went to the Library to discover the role of Madam Speaker. But her position on the boundary commission is purely nominal; it is not a working position.

**The First Deputy Chairman:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has gone far enough and I hope that he will now address his remarks to the amendment.

**Mr. Banks:** Of course—I was just trying to give a rudimentary lesson in constitutional theory to the hon. Member for Eltham.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Is there not some truth in the suggestion of semi-secret proposals? Does my hon. Friend recall that, not long ago in this very Chamber, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), now the President of the Board of Trade, asked why we needed London boroughs? Is my hon. Friend aware that many people in London are not aware that under section 14(3)(d) and (e) of the Local Government Act 1992, which was supposed not to apply to London, the commission can recommend

"the abolition of a London borough and the distribution of its area among other London boroughs"?

I am sure that most London borough councillors are not aware of that. Certainly some Members of Parliament are not. That reinforces the case for some form of delay as set out in the amendment unless and until that matter has been addressed and concluded.

**Mr. Banks:** I agree with my hon. Friend. That is all part of the uncertainty argument that I put earlier. When Nicholas Ridley was Secretary of State for the

Environment, he made it clear that he felt that boroughs should simply have an annual meeting with councillors getting together—in his words—over a good lunch, in order to decide which particular contracts were to be allocated to which particular——

**Mr. Jim Dowd** (Lewisham, West): Friends.

**Mr. Banks:** That was the unwritten part of what he was saying.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) emphasises the uncertainty that exists in London. As the parliamentary boundary commissioners are paying some heed to boundaries for the local government boroughs, it is obvious that they need to know in some detail what Government thinking is. I hope that eventually the Minister will give us an honest and open account of the current thinking within the Department of the Environment and the Home Office on the future structure of local government in London.

I am not talking about now. The Minister can no doubt say that at the moment the Government have no plans to make any changes. I want to know what long-term thinking—assuming that that is not too much to expect from Cabinet deliberations—there is on local government structures. I cannot believe that nothing is happening. There have been too many representations from too many bodies to which the Conservative party pays heed to the effect that something needs to be done about London if it is to play its part as one of the major European capital cities and to retain its position as the financial centre of Europe, and that it must have some sort of direction, coherence and identity. The Corporation of the City of London is saying that, as are the commercial and business interests within the square mile.

It is not only Labour Members who need to know; it is not only the boundary commissioners looking at parliamentary constituencies who need to know; it is also the local government boundary commission. Everyone wants to know. It is therefore incumbent upon the Government to tell us.

Clarification of the Government's plan is particularly important as the local government boundary commission under Sir John Banham, which is due to take over from the present commission, has been given explicit power to make radical changes to the pattern of London boroughs. Section 14(3) of the Local Government Act 1992 allows the new commission to recommend the following changes:

> "(d) the constitution of a new London borough by the amalgamation of two or more London boroughs or by the aggregation of parts of London boroughs or by the separation of part of a London borough;
>
> (e) the abolition of a London borough and the distribution of its area among other London boroughs."

That is explosive stuff—not my speech I hasten to add, but what I have just read out is explosive stuff. When the people of London get to know that there is the possibility of boroughs and boundaries disappearing and amalgamations taking place, they will want to know what part they are to play in those deliberations. The Minister owes it to the House to say what sort of democratic processes will be brought into play so that communities can discuss with which part of London or community they want to maintain links, or whether they want to go somewhere else.

5.45 pm

What we have long missed in London is a proper discussion about London's local government. We do not want decisions made by Ministers on the run, as it were, or by Prime Ministers who take a particular dislike to figures or bodies, or by Conservatives who cannot now retreat from the face of Thatcherism because to do so would be like spitting on the previous Prime Minister's grave. They have done much stamping and spitting on her grave up to now, but I do not think that they want to go any further.

The people of London deserve something better than their local government structure being left to decisions made on the back of an envelope in the Cabinet from time to time, with various statements being made ex cathedra by Ministers and those who are now governor of Hong Kong or who have gone on to different positions in the Cabinet. London deserves to know. At least the amendment gives the Minister an opportunity to start the great debate on London that we want. I hope that he will show himself ready and able to meet the challenge. Go on!

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I was so diverted by the rehearsal of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for his visit to Vilnius that I did not notice that no other hon. Member had risen.

I shall start with the hon. Gentleman because he finished on a rousing note. I shall not tell him the "Lloyd" plan for the future of London, but in a few moments I shall come to the Government's plans for the future of London.

The hon. Gentleman read from the Local Government Act 1992 the powers that the Local Government Commission will have to recommend the amalgamation and division of London boroughs. It certainly does have that power to recommend, just as I believe the local government boundary commission which it supersedes had.

But local government boundary commissions make their reports at intervals of 10 to 15 years, so the next report of the Local Government Commission after the one that is currently under way will probably not come forward until well into the next century.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) put most of his questions in a form that related to whether the Government had a secret agenda to change the structure of London's local government in the foreseeable future. Most of his complaints, however, seemed to relate to the rule in schedule 2 of the 1986 Act which precludes the crossing of borough boundaries by the parliamentary commission except in exceptional circumstances.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government have no such agenda. It is a matter for the Department of the Environment rather than for me, but in summary I can say that the Government have no plans to review the general structure of local government in London. They have no desire whatever to inflict another layer of bureaucracy on London which would create, not solve, problems. They have set up a special Cabinet sub-committee. That relates to some of the references made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West to plans for the future and various suggestions. The sub-committee is chaired by the Secretary of State for the Environment and has been set up to co-ordinate Government policy in London.

*[Mr. Peter Lloyd]*

It intends to establish a private sector London forum to promote London as a world centre of business, tourism, and culture. None of those changes and developments affects London local government structure or boundaries.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** What opportunities will Londoners and their representatives, such as local councils and the London Boroughs Association, have to discuss the future shape of the London forum? That is an important development, and many of us would like to be involved in the forum's creation and in selecting its members.

**Mr. Lloyd:** That question should be addressed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I am sure that he will take on board all good ideas—even those submitted by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. However, that has nothing to do with London local government structure or boundaries, which is the subject matter of the Bill and of amendment No. 8 in particular.

**Mr. Darling:** Is it not ironic that the Cabinet has established a special committee, but that matters affecting many other parts of the country will be considered by local councils? That is typical of the Government's approach to London and of their fear of its electorate. If there is to be no change, why did the 1986 Act allow the local government boundary commission to examine the constitution of new London boroughs and amalgamations, and so on?

If the Government do not intend to do anything about London, why as recently as earlier this year did they seek to amend the 1986 Act, which specifically enjoins the commission to consider such aspects—and presumably it would have the contemplation that Sir John Banham might recommend changes?

**Mr. Lloyd:** He might do so, but those powers to recommend exist in previous legislation. As I told the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, another local government boundary commission review is not due this decade. Commissions make their reviews at intervals. We are in the middle of a review now. A review under the terms of the new legislation—not dissimilar to the 1986 Act—is not expected until into the next century.

London boroughs and their boundaries are not due to be considered in the foreseeable future. In the normal scheme of things, that will be done 10 or 15 years after the current commission has reported.

**Mr. Bermingham:** I am well aware of the local government review proposals and of the action that Sir John Banham intends to take. Is it already in mind to change the shape of London boroughs at some future time? If so, that surely adds weight to the suggestion that I made to the Home Secretary earlier today with regard to the 1986 Act—that the parliamentary boundary commissioners should be allowed to cross London borough boundaries to ensure parity with the rest of England.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The hon. Gentleman concentrated on that point for most of his speech, and it was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central. I appreciate the force of the argument. It is open to the boundary commission to cross London borough boundaries if, in the commission's judgment, an unreasonable and unacceptable disparity in the size of a constituency's population would otherwise exist. In the same way that the commission can cross London boundaries, it can cross other base line boundaries in the rest of the United Kingdom.

It is for the commission to decide whether the disparities have become so great that it must cross boroughs. It is for the commission, not the Government, to interpret its responsibilities under the schedule in question.

I and the Government would be loath to alter the boundary commission's rules at this stage. I hold out no hope that I would think it practicable and right to do so. I shall, however, discuss with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department the points made in the debate. I emphasise that at this stage I do not consider that change would be practicable. Nevertheless, we will turn our minds to the comments that have been made and to the possibilities before Report stage and Third Reading.

**Mr. Bermingham:** Does not the Minister appreciate that at the heart of the 1983 case was the ruling by the appellate committee in the House of Lords that it could not interfere with a statutory base? The position has worsened—as the Minister knows from the experiences that other Conservative Members recounted this afternoon. If the review is to be just and not to be seen as partisan, the rules for London ought to be the same as for the rest of the country.

**Mr. Lloyd:** In the rest of the country, there are always boundaries over which the commission may not trespass other than in exceptional circumstances. There are different boundaries for different reasons in different parts of the country. It may be that the hon. Gentleman is right and that the position has deteriorated in respect of London. It may be more difficult to devise constituencies of roughly equal size or of acceptably similar size—in which case, it will be for the boundary commission to reach its own conclusions under the rules in the 1986 Act, on which it is entirely for the commission to reach its own judgment.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** My hon. Friend's earlier remarks will have provided some comfort to hon. Members in all parts of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) spoke of a skin or envelope around one or possibly two constituencies. That is very different from the situation in most English counties, whose boundaries contain at least four constituencies—except in the Isle of Wight. The figure can be as many as 14, but the lower limit is what matters. I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to return at a later stage to say whether he believes that the proposition made in the amendment that was not called today, that "excessive disparity" can mean 10,000 extra votes, and should certainly apply in the case of 20,000 votes, is one that the boundary commissioners might be expected to share. If the commissioners do not consider a disparity of 20,000 votes excessive, we ought to change the primary legislation.

**Mr. Lloyd:** My hon. Friend puts his finger on one of the difficulties confronting the commission when he refers to the envelopes in other parts of the country that contain a varying number of constituencies. In other parts of the

country, that number is very small compared with the huge number in the whole of Greater London. If we abandon the instruction contained in schedule 2 to the 1986 legislation, we shall create enormous difficulties for the commission. I am not sure that the suggestion—and as this was made in an amendment that was not called, I shall not dwell on it—that the boundary commission should be given some instruction as to an excessive disparity would answer the case.

Even if such an amendment were made, the Bill would still contain the requirement that the commission is obliged to give precedence to the borough boundary—even though the numbers were unequal. Substantial problems would still exist. I am not sure that my hon. Friend's suggestion represents an effective remedy.

Having considered that point, I believe that it would be extremely difficult to introduce an acceptable change. I understand the arguments advanced by hon. Members on both sides of the House—albeit not unanimously, because the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) argued the other way. However, there is sufficient force of argument for me and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to want to reconsider the issues. Nevertheless, I would be misleading the House if I were to lead hon. Members to believe that I envisaged a solution. I want to consider the arguments again.

**Mr. Bermingham:** The problem is not so great. In the shire counties, 10, 12 or 14 seats can bring us closer to the norm. I believe—the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) will correct me if I am wrong—that merely allowing one seat to cross the boundary between certain south London boroughs would remove all the disparity, allowing us to reach the required norm of 69,000 very quickly. The boundary commission knows where those boroughs are. The difficulty has been dealt with elsewhere in the country, and it can be dealt with very simply in London.

6 pm

**Mr. Lloyd:** The hon. Gentleman's proposed solution would tend to leave matters as they are. If it is so simple to achieve a rough uniformity in that part of London, it can reasonably be left to the boundary commission to regard the opportunity as an exceptional one of which it would be right to take advantage. However, what the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central said about the grouping of boroughs in parts of London underlined the complexity of what he proposes. There are 84 constituencies in Greater London, and I suspect that, if the boundary commission is to manage them effectively, they will have to be grouped. We are well down the track with the boundary commission review, and I do not think that it would be right or practicable to change the rules at this stage, given the complicated adjustments that that would require.

The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is no longer in his place——

**Mr. Tony Banks:** My hon. Friend has gone to check the *Hansard* report. Apparently, he said something that has caused concern.

**Mr. Lloyd:** In that case, I shall read *Hansard* with interest tomorrow. According to the rules, the meaning of what an hon. Member has said must appear in the record, even if the grammar has been tidied up.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, East cast such fantastical aspersions on the objectivity and non-partisanship of the boundary commissions, but I shall not dwell on the matter, except to say that the hon. Gentleman did not seem to carry either side of the House with him, and to add that, at the last general election, it took some 71,000 voters to elect a Conservative Member and some 61,000 to elect a Labour Member. If the boundary commission was indeed biased in favour of the Conservative party, it did an extremely poor job.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) asked whether we would examine the boundaries of Greater London and the county of Surrey. I must disappoint my hon. Friend, and tell him that we do not intend to do so in the foreseeable future—probably not during this century. That issue is tied up with the whole question of the distribution of seats in London.

We have said very little about amendment No. 8 itself. The amendment would enable the parliamentary boundary commission for England to delay its report for London until it knows what the London borough boundaries will be on 12 June 2000. I hoped that an Opposition Member would explain the significance of that date. Perhaps it is a printer's error for 1 June; if not, however, its significance escapes me—and it seems to have escaped the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central as well.

I note that the amendment uses the words "may delay". Presumably the commission would be able to produce its report without knowing the boundaries if it felt that that was the right course. As we established yesterday, however, the 1986 Act requires the commission to produce reports that relate to all the parts of the United Kingdom for which they are responsible. That would prevent the English commission from presenting a report that left out London. The Bill, on the other hand, requires the commissions to produce their reports by the end of 1994.

The amendment manages to contradict parts of the 1986 Act as well as the central feature of the Bill. If accepted, it would produce internal contradictions in the legislation. I realise that it is a probing amendment, but I believe that Opposition Members intend to divide the House, so I shall explain why I do not think it should go on to the statute book. There is a good practical reason—albeit a technical one—for my view.

As I have said, I can give some comfort to Opposition Members. The local government boundary commission for England will produce its recommendations for the London and metropolitan boroughs in the autumn; there will thus be adequate time for the House to approve them by statutory instrument, so that they are effective by 1 April 1994. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central wisely refrained from moving amendment No. 6, there will also be adequate time for the boundary commission for England to take the revised London borough boundaries fully into account; indeed, it will be obliged to do so before submitting its final report.

Although the amendment is not acceptable, what it ostensibly seeks to achieve will almost certainly happen, because the London boroughs will not be due for another boundary review for 10 to 15 years. That will take us well into the next century, far beyond the magic and unexplained date of 12 June 2000.

**Mr. Dowd:** I support the amendment. I have not been reassured by anything that the Minister has said, principally because for many years the Tory stewardship of London's affairs has served Londoners very badly, especially inner Londoners.

My hon. Friends the Members for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) produced their traditional sterling defence of the Greater London council. Some of us, however, regarded its creation with little more than equanimity. It was created by a Conservative party that had given up hope of ever securing a majority on the even earlier and much more lamented London county council. I did not take a very active part in the debate that took place across London at the time, because I was at the council's tender mercies in one of its schools. The fact remains, however, that the traditions of the LCC and its successor are now denied to the people of London.

The amendment holds that it is not a good idea to allow for a wholesale review of the governance of London that does not include at its heart a review of the provision for that governance. The date of 12 June seems reasonable, although I am not sure why it is there; I would support 11 June or 19 June—particularly 11 June, which is my girlfriend's birthday and would have some sentimental value, if nothing else. The point is, however, that we need more reassurance than the Government have given about the form of government that London can expect.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) said that he was prepared to debate the matter some other time. Let us debate it first, and then return to parliamentary boundaries. Opposition Members consider it imperative for us to know what the people of London can look forward to before deciding that their parliamentary representation adequately reflects their needs and aspirations.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** I am sorry to interrupt, but my hon. Friend has mentioned the governance of London. Did he observe the ghost of Christmas past sidling into the Chamber and seating himself on the Front Bench, in the form of the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)?

**Mr. Dowd:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I sincerely hope that it is not the ghost of Christmas to come, otherwise we are all in for a pretty lean time.

The primary function of the Greater London council was as a redistributive tax mechanism. The Government chose to abolish that, and once they had done so the council's value to Londoners, principally to inner Londoners, was zero, because the problems of inner London are not the same as the problems of outer London: the problems of Surbiton are not the problems of Deptford. Simply to hoick them into a job-lot for the convenience of the Conservative party was a totally inadequate reason for the existence of the GLC once its redistributive mechanism had been lost.

**Mr. Tracey:** The hon. Gentleman makes one of the strong points that the Conservative party has made consistently in the past decade—that the interests of the people of Surbiton were not the same as the interests of the people of Deptford. Therefore, the Greater London council was superfluous, irrelevant and a costly nonsense, which is why we got rid of it.

**Mr. Dowd:** The Conservative party got rid of the GLC when it ceased to serve its purpose.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** On a point of order, Dame Janet. Will you confirm that we are still dealing with amendment No. 8, my copy of which may be printed differently from the hon. Gentleman's, but which seems to refer to the boundaries of London boroughs, not to the future or past of the Greater London council or a greater London authority?

**The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes):** It is fair to say that the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) has been going rather wide of the amendment. I try to give reasonable latitude to hon. Members, but I hope that the hon. Member will take that point on board.

**Mr. Dowd:** I apologise if I have stretched parliamentary convention to its limits, and perhaps beyond it. I am learning rapidly.

I hope that you, Dame Janet, will forgive Labour Members if they express grave misgivings about the proposed Banham commission. I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East word for word, lest I have to leap out to the *Hansard* office every few moments.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Given the allegations that have been made, my hon. Friend can call me an old cynic if he likes, but when the chairman of the Local Government Commission is the ex-director general of the CBI—an organisation that is well known as the lickspittle of the Government—it is not surprising that we think that there is some stitch-up going on.

**Mr. Dowd:** As I said, I am learning fast in this place. I have just learnt not to let my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West sit behind me, because that is what I have written down here.

Before Sir John Banham was director general of the CBI, and before he was knighted, he was in charge of the Audit Commission. Where do hon. Members imagine the current director general of the Audit Commission will go when the director general of the CBI retires?

**Mr. Banks:** Give us a clue.

**Mr. Dowd:** I shall happily give way if anybody wants to answer. Howard Davies of the Audit Commission will occupy the seat that will be vacated by Sir John Banham.

**Mr. Banks:** It is a disgrace.

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Order. The only disgrace is the way in which Members are intervening from sedentary positions. I suggest that everybody sit more quietly and that we permit the hon. Member to resume his speech, but strictly according to the amendment under consideration.

**Mr. Dowd:** The Banham commission is a central part of the Bill, certainly of future provisions for boundaries.

**Mr. Winnick:** As the amendment refers to the report of the boundary commission, is it not essential that we should have full confidence in the impartiality of the boundary commissioners? If there is a feeling that, as my hon. Friends the Members for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) have pointed out, we cannot have confidence in the impartiality of the commissioners, that is

disturbing indeed. I do not know whether corruption has occurred, but in the past 13 years the Conservative Government have been keen to place their own people in positions of authority. If boundary commissioners are sympathetic to the Tory cause, our confidence in their impartiality is undermined. The Home Secretary had to reassure us that all is well with the Bill. Like my hon. Friends, I am rather disturbed by everything——

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Not for the first time, I remind hon. Members that interventions should be short. That was far from short.

6.15 pm

**Mr. Dowd:** I shall explain why some of us are so suspicious about the powers that have been granted to the Banham commission. Dulwich Conservative association, whose most illustrious member is Lady Barking, has called for the creation of a borough comprising the southern part of the London borough of Lambeth, the southern part of the London borough of Southwark and two wards forming the western part of the London borough of Lewisham. Such a creation had never occurred to anybody in the history of south London. Such an artifice would have so little in common with the people and communities that it covered that it would defy logic, except in one respect: it would create a Conservative-held stronghold in an area that is currently denied to it. Labour Members are deeply alarmed about the Banham commission having powers to create such monstrosities.

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke):** This is becoming a slightly schoolboy debate, with Labour Members attacking the impartiality of the commissioners. We know that the vast majority of sensible members of the Labour party, as opposed to a few left-wing Labour Members from London, do not agree. The Banham commission is not the subject matter of the Bill. We are dealing with the parliamentary boundary commission, which nobody can traduce. The purpose of the amendment, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State has just made clear, would be to delay the English boundary review until the year 2000. That delay cannot be defended on any high moral ground by the Labour party. It is seeking to go back on its acceptance of the Bill, and the principles behind it, on Second Reading. It is disgraceful that it has moved an amendment that is a thinly veiled disguise for an attempt to delay the Bill and has tried to occupy the high moral ground by making unjustified attacks on the impartiality of public servants who give up their time for the boundary commission.

**Mr. Livingstone:** On a point of order, Dame Janet. We have now seen the disturbing face of prejudice, bias and corruption, which confirms what I said earlier. May I appeal to you to suspend the sitting until members of the boundary commission can be brought here to give detailed answers to the points of corruption that we have raised?

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** The answer is no.

**Mr. Dowd:** Conservative Members will be delighted to know that I have almost finished.

**Mr. Gorst:** Will the hon. Gentleman kindly help us by saying exactly what would give him confidence in the boundary commission? Would it help if, for example, the commission were to bend the arrangements slightly in one or two constituencies to enable Labour to secure seats that it does not already have? What else would give Labour confidence? It would help us enormously to know precisely what it had in mind.

**Mr. Dowd:** In response to that intervention, one thing that would reassure me would be for John Banham to have absolutely nothing to do with parliamentary constituency boundaries in the future.

As I said, the people of London have been singularly ill-served by Tory stewardship in the past. The bigotry of the Thatcher years was merely its zenith, not its origin. Until we have a damn sight more reassurance than is forthcoming at the moment, hon. Members representing London constituencies in particular will not stand by and let people in inner London be so ill-served in the future.

**Mr. Spearing:** The Minister conceded that there was something different about London, and I gathered from his brief speech that he is opposing the amendment because of the timing. What he said about the date was reinforced by the Home Secretary, but I think that the Minister will agree that there is a reason for delaying the review—not necessarily for the time mentioned in the amendment.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Spearing:** The Minister shakes his head, but let us test that. Once the boundary commission has presented its recommendations to the Home Secretary this autumn, is not the plan to lay the necessary statutory instruments in 1993? I think that that is the timetable.

**Mr. Lloyd** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Spearing:** The Minister nods. That means that around this time next year there will be some debate on the merits of the statutory instruments, whatever they may be. It is clear from the scope given to the boundary commission, which I quoted in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and which he also quoted in his concluding remarks, that it is at least conceivable—I hope that the Minister will respond briefly—that he intends to publish the recommendations before he decides which to accept.

The timing is important. Until the recommendations are published, until the statutory instrument is laid or until the Minister states that he does not intend to lay one, it is conceivable that any London borough—I presume that the power is not merely for one but for any number to be abolished—which feels that it might be up for dissolution will feel any degree of security. That is how I understand it, and I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm that that is the timetable. If it is, I suggest that any degree of certainty for local government administration and the distribution of seats is at risk. Therefore, uncertainty precedes the delay that we are advocating.

**Mr. Lloyd:** Any recommendations of any commission must cause uncertainty before they are known, because no one knows what they suggest. The boundary commission will report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in the near future. He will introduce orders to put into effect the recommendations as they stand or with modifications, or he may decide not to introduce orders, but that will be made known to the House and it will be for the House to decide whether a statutory instrument should be put into

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

effect. The timetable will be such that there will be time for the parliamentary boundary commission to have regard to the recommendations in the proposals which it must make to the Home Secretary at the end of 1994. That is clear and logical.

I hope that it satisfies the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) because there is no other way to proceed if we are to achieve what Labour Members apparently want—no change to the parliamentary boundaries in London until we have the borough boundaries in place as they are likely to be for the next decade. That will be the case because the review of local government boundaries will be carried out by the present local government boundary commission, and the new one that is taking over is not due to report until the normal interval has elapsed, which should take us well into the next century.

**Mr. Spearing:** I think that the Minister has confirmed almost precisely what I was saying. My concern is not only with the linkage of parliamentary seats and the future of local government in London but with the uncertainty that must arise between now and when the Minister or the Home Secretary chooses to reveal his intentions about any such recommendations. That reinforces the case for some delay.

This debate has been partly a London debate, but the two Ministers do not represent London constituencies. I make no complaint about that, but they should realise that in London the link between the function of a Member of Parliament and the function of local government is, I suspect, rather more intimate than in other parts of the country, not least because the functions—*[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary should not laugh.

The functions of the Greater London council were not those advertised by the former Government in their propaganda. The GLC was fundamental to the services of London and if its duties are not taken on by the borough councils, they must be taken on by hon. Members. Therefore, the number of issues with which London Members have to deal day after day, in telephone message after telephone message and green card after green card, in relatively small constituencies but in highly complex urban areas are of a different character and calibre from those facing many hon. Members from other parts of the country. That is especially true in comparison with those representing cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham which have different local government set-ups to which they can refer.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I have listened to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), whose views I usually respect. My expression was one of exasperation because he has not accepted the clear explanation that account will be taken of London local government boundaries when the parliamentary boundary commission reports. The hon. Gentleman may have been misled by some of the earlier debate. He does not belong to the loony left in London, although the debate has largely been dominated by the loony left which has attacked members of the Banham commission, which is not involved in the process, and has taken the opportunity to attack people who are not in the House to defend themselves.

The local government commission sitting in London is almost due to report. That commission, which is not the one chaired by Sir John Banham, will report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in the very near future. He will no doubt make proposals to the House in the light of its recommendations. That will be in time for the parliamentary boundary commission, which we are now considering, to take into account the new boundaries when it undertakes its review which we believe should end by December 1994. When the——

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Order. Interventions should be short, even those from Secretaries of State.

**Mr. Clarke:** I apologise, Dame Janet, but I hope that what I said was clear. The hon. Gentleman's argument was beside the point. The amendment would delay the whole shooting match until the year 2000.

**Mr. Spearing:** The Home Secretary's need to enlighten the Committee—I am grateful to him—underlines my point. There is a degree of uncertainty in the matter which should not exist. I agree with the Home Secretary that there is a sequence in the report of the local government boundary commission, the laying of orders and the final recommendations of the parliamentary boundary commission.

My point concerns the opportunity that the House will have to discuss and to consider those recommendations. Despite my request, the Minister has not said when that opportunity will be. I suggest—I think that the Minister agrees—that boundaries could be changed in London by the laying of a single statutory instrument. I do not know whether it will be a negative or an affirmative instrument. Even if it is an affirmative instrument, the local government map of London could be changed by a maximum of one and a half hours of debate.

6.30 pm

The extent to which the Conservative party wipes away the importance of local government can be illustrated by the statutory instrument which set up the London Docklands development corporation. Half of its area is in my constituency, but I was not even able to speak on that instrument. I suggest to Ministers that they take a little more care in their concern for the operation of local government and for the work of their hon. Friends in Greater London than they have done previously.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** My point relates to something that the Home Secretary said in his intervention. Does my hon. Friend share my sense of annoyance about the Home Secretary's reaction when we criticise someone such as Sir John Banham, formerly director general of the Confederation of British Industry? If a Labour Government had put a former general secretary of the Trades Union Congress in charge of a boundary commission, the accusations from Conservative Members would be legion. It is a bit much for the Home Secretary to say that we are crying foul when he knows damn well that if we put up one of our stooges in place of one of the Government's stooges, he would say precisely what I have been saying.

**Mr. Spearing:** My hon. Friend knows well that commissions which look at matters objectively carry the

confidence of all parties. From what I have heard of the debate this evening, that does not appear to be the case in this instance.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The underlying point is that the amendment includes the word "delay", and the delay concerns the bringing in of fairer constituencies. The electorates of the three Newham Members added together come to roughly the same as the electorate of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the electorate of my hon. Friend the Minister. Looked at in that way, the Labour party is arguing for unfair constituencies and unfair voting.

**Mr. Spearing:** My case does not necessarily concern the dates. The amendment is a probing amendment. I seek greater care and, therefore, a longer time scale, which could be called delay, for considering these important matters.

I will explain why boundaries in London are important by reference to the Minister's speech. The Minister told us that the Conservative party made clear in its election manifesto that there was to be a Cabinet committee which, in effect, would take over responsibility for the co-ordination of public affairs in London. Previously, that co-ordination was the responsibility of the Greater London council. In relation to the east Thames corridor or the organisation of docklands, there may be a recommendation from the boundary commission for significant changes. All sorts of rumours have been going round about that. It will be necessary to take a far longer period in which to consider the consequences.

So far, the Government have not shown any sensitivity when dealing with strategic affairs in London. If they had, we should not have the debacle of Canary Wharf, the debacle of the docklands light railway or what is likely to be a further debacle—the mess over the docklands-Thames corridor and the planning for the high-speed link to the channel. That may appear to be a long way from local government, but it is not in view of its consequences for London. I support the element of delay and the element of reconsideration which are the main parts of the amendment.

**Mr. Darling:** This has been a useful debate even though, at times, it has strayed rather more widely from the terms of the amendment than I might have anticipated.

As I and some of my hon. Friends have said, the amendment is essentially a probing amendment. Given the narrow nature of the long title of the Bill, it was possible only to table such an amendment if we were to remain in order. The purpose of the amendment was to draw the Government on what they planned to do about the structure of local government in London over the next few years, which has some significance for the parliamentary boundary commission.

The Home Secretary is right in saying that the date of 12 June 2000 is arbitrary. In fact, the date was 1 June when the amendment left my desk; it seems to have been transcribed as 12 June by the time it appeared on the amendment paper. As the date was arbitrary, I saw no need to table a further amendment or to do something to get it back to 1 June.

The hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) referred to delay. There is no intention to delay the report of the boundary commission until the year 2000, which would be absurd. Equally, it would be absurd to hold back the boundary commission for England just because there might be problems in London. That was not the point, as I think the Minister, the Home Secretary and those advising them—although they will have advised Ministers to answer the points in detail—will have grasped. They understand that the object of the exercise was to try to ascertain from the Government what they planned to do with regard to local government in London.

Interestingly, Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members raised questions about the future government of London. The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), who is not in his place, clearly has territorial ambitions as he represents the smallest constituency in London, if not in England. He asked where London would end in the next few years, and whether it would extend or whether the area covered by the London boroughs would decrease.

Under the terms of schedule 4 to the 1986 Act, it is clearly intended by Parliament that the boundary commission must have substantial regard to the London boroughs. Our argument is that if the pattern of the London boroughs is to change over the next eight to 10 years, we should know so that the boundary commission can have regard to those changes. I say that for all the reasons given by hon. Members of all parties. I am glad that the Minister appears to be nodding; at last he has grasped the point.

Other useful points were raised. I emphasise one point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who seems to be off checking *Hansard* again. He drew our attention to the fact that from the terms of the parliamentary answer given by the Home Secretary today to the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), who has also gone, the quota entitlement for Brent would be 2·4, although, as I said earlier, 18,000 people were missing from the register between 1987 and 1992. If the boundary commission wants to reach the correct allocation of seats, it should have regard to the actual number of people in Brent rather than merely to those on the register, if the register is inaccurate.

Other hon. Members have drawn attention time and again to the point that there are problems in London because we believe that the Government intend to change the pattern of local government there. I and my hon. Friends referred to the report by the local government boundary commission which has drawn attention to substantial difficulties in drawing boundaries in London. It has drawn attention to the role and functions of local government in London, and to the mixed pattern of administration between Government and non-Government bodies.

Given the powers of the local government boundary commission, the report is extremely strong stuff. It asks the Government to have regard to the formidable difficulties in London. In an intervention in an earlier debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) drew attention to paras (d) and (e) of section 14(3) of the Local Government Act 1992, which make it clear that the Local Government Commission—the body chaired by Sir John Banham, as opposed to the local government boundary commission—has the power to examine the constitution of London boroughs.

If the Government intended the Local Government Commission to examine the constitution of London boroughs, they must have contemplated that the boroughs would be changed. If changes are made to the boroughs,

*[Mr. Darling]*

changes will be made to the boundaries. The local government boundary commission might wish to have regard to all those matters when compiling the report which it will lay before Parliament some time after the end of 1994.

I said that the amendment was a probing amendment, and so it is, to a substantial degree. It was never intended to be a perfectly drafted amendment suitable for inclusion in the Bill. It was not the intention to table a wrecking amendment. Indeed, a wrecking amendment probably would not have been in order. But, as the Government have failed to give any satisfactory answer on what they plan for London, even though the Secretary of State and the Minister are here to answer on behalf of the Government—whether the answer is from the Home Office or any other Department is irrelevant—I regret that the Opposition feel that we should press the matter to a Division. Accordingly, I invite the Committee to support the amendment.

*Question put*, That the amendment be made:-

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 248, Noes 302.

**Division No. 40]** **[6.40 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Dr John *(C'p'l'nd)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Michael
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Thomas McAvoy and**
**Mr. Robert N. Wareing.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(S...y)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon W...)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Tim Boswell.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 2, line 44, at end add—

*[Mr. David Trimble]*

"(4) In Schedule 2, rule 4(c), of the 1986 Act, for the word "ward" there shall be substituted the words "district electoral area".".

After what we have listened to for the past couple of hours, it is interesting to arrive at the debate on this amendment. We have heard about the inviolability of London borough boundaries and about the difficulties that arise from sticking to borough and county boundaries in any revision of parliamentary boundaries in England and Wales—*[Interruption.]*

**The Second Deputy Chairman:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but there is too much noise and I find it difficult to hear him speak.

**Mr. Trimble:** Thank you, Dame Janet. I used my comments on the previous debate partly as a throat-clearing exercise, because I had expected Members to make some hubbub when dispersing.

The idea for the amendment occurred to me after listening to, and reflecting on, the speech by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on Second Reading. He dealt with the difficulties encountered in Birmingham, which comprises about one dozen constituencies, each based on three or four wards. As I recollect, two were based on four wards and the remainder on three. The hon. Member said that each Birmingham ward contained about 19,000 electors, so that the size of constituencies increases in steps of 19,000.

The rules in the schedule to the Act direct attention to county boundaries in England and Wales and to London borough boundaries, and the basic building blocks for parliamentary boundaries in England and Wales are wards, which are also the basic electoral units.

The reason why I tabled the amendment, and why I hope that it will commend itself to the House, is that the situation in Northern Ireland is anomalous. The rules in the schedule apply, not to county, borough or district boundaries, but to ward boundaries. That is anomalous in itself, but it is even more so in Northern Ireland, where wards have no electoral significance.

Let me explain some of the background. Until local government reorganisation in Northern Ireland, local authorities operated on a basis comparable to that in England and Wales. Authorities—whether counties, county boroughs or boroughs—were divided into multi-Member wards, electing three Members of Parliament, on roughly the same basis as those in England and Wales. During the reorganisation it was proposed that the three-Member wards should be replaced by smaller single-Member wards. The reasoning behind that suggestion had much to commend it. Unfortunately, in 1973 a form of proportional representation was introduced—a single transferable vote—which required multi-Member wards, and so the proposed single-Member wards were grouped together for electoral purposes into what were called district electoral areas, which remain the basis unit for electoral purposes in Northern Ireland.

Under the regulations now in force, a district electoral area must consist of five, six or seven wards. The wards notionally exist; we have ward boundaries and the electoral register is prepared on a ward basis. However, for electoral purposes the ward is not significant. The district electoral area is the significant element for electoral purposes. That is the area in which the vote takes place and on which the count operates. Obviously, party structure and organisation is, or should be, related to the district electoral area, of which the ward is just a sub-division and is of significance only to the structure of the electoral register.

7 pm

The spirit behind the rules in the schedule to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 is that local government units should be the basic building blocks for parliamentary boundaries. That is sensible. There are horrendous problems if parliamentary boundaries march across the basic electoral unit. That does not happen in England and Wales because the parliamentary boundaries are drawn up on ward boundaries and they are largely confined within counties and county boroughs. That is not the position in Northern Ireland.

I shall pursue the analogy between Belfast and Birmingham. In the city of Belfast there are 200,000 voters, which is significantly fewer than the three-quarters of a million in Birmingham. The 200,000 voters in Belfast are divided among nine district electoral areas. That gives each district electoral area a number of voters that is not much different from the figure of 19,000 in Birmingham. The hon. Member for Perry Barr pointed out that in Birmingham the constituencies are made up of three or four wards. Those wards are analogous in size to the district electoral areas in Belfast.

How are the four constituencies of Belfast divided? Belfast, South and Belfast, West each contain two entire district electoral areas and part of a third. Therefore, part of the boundary of each constituency runs across the middle of a district electoral area. Belfast, North contains one complete district electoral area only and two that are divided. The situation is worse in Belfast, East, which contains parts of three district electoral areas. That constituency does not contain a single complete district electoral area and the parliamentary constituency operates on boundaries that are quite different from those of local government. It cuts across not only district electoral areas, but the city boundary to take in parts of Castlereagh.

A similar pattern exists in other Northern Ireland constituencies. The problem is not quite so acute outside Belfast because smaller councils and, consequently, smaller district electoral areas exist. The parliamentary boundaries correspond entirely to those of local government in just two of the constituencies in Northern Ireland. By local government boundaries, I am referring to the basic electoral units in Northern Ireland—the district electoral areas. In 15 of the 17 seats, the district electoral areas are split. In fact, 13 district electoral areas are split and two of them are split three ways. The parliamentary boundaries in Northern Ireland cut across district council and county areas.

In England and Wales, regard must be given to county boundaries or, in London, to borough boundaries. The amendment does not suggest that regard should be given to district or city council boundaries in Northern Ireland. For the past couple of hours, I have listened to London Members who have spoken about such boundaries at great length. However, I am merely asking that, in Northern Ireland, the constituencies should relate to the basic unit used in local government elections. At present, that is not the case and it causes problems to my party and, I understand, to other political parties in Northern Ireland. I have not consulted other parties about the amendment,

so one should not read into my comments a claim that other political parties endorse it. I should be surprised, however, if they were opposed to it.

Would making district electoral areas the basic unit for parliamentary boundaries in Northern Ireland cause any problems? I think not. In Northern Ireland there are nearly 100 district electoral areas and there would be no great difficulty in matching parliamentary boundaries to those areas. For example, there are nine district electoral areas in Belfast and, traditionally, Belfast has always had four constituencies. That does not create any problems because the basic units would simply go beyond the city council boundary and into the suburbs. In fact, the Belfast city boundary is artificially restricted because of the jealousy of the Stormont Government towards Belfast city council, but that is not relevant to the debate. The adjoining councils of Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and Lisburn are in all respects extensions of Belfast and there would be no problem in including district electoral areas from those councils to reach the appropriate figure to create a constituency. That could be done without creating any great disparity in numbers.

If there are difficulties, we should remember that rule 4 in the schedule is prefaced by the phrase "So far as practicable". Therefore, the regard to be given to ward boundaries, as stated in the present wording of the schedule, or to district electoral boundaries, as the amendment would suggest, is not absolute. It can be overridden so far as that is practicable. In fact, in Northern Ireland, that qualifying phrase has been invoked by the boundary commission to divide eleven wards. Therefore, the ward unit, which has no significance for electoral purposes, has been divided in eleven cases—10 are in Belfast and the other is in Newry. That is indefensible.

Another factor makes this an appropriate time to make the change. In Northern Ireland, we are concluding the revision of local government wards. The next stage in that process will be the appointment of a commissioner to draw together the wards into district electoral areas. In the normal course of events, we would expect that appointment to be made fairly soon. I am not sure of the exact date and do not know whether the Northern Ireland Office has made an announcement, but we could expect the process to be completed by the beginning of next year.

That revision must be made soon because we need to know the district electoral areas before the local government elections next May. Would hon. Members from England tolerate it if, 11 months before elections, they did not know the boundaries on which those elections would be fought? In Northern Ireland, the elections will be fought, not on ward boundaries, but on district electoral area boundaries. I refer to the current revision because if it is thought that there would be any difficulty in switching from ward to district electoral area boundaries in the revision of parliamentary boundaries, which will take place shortly, that can be taken into account now when drawing up the new district electoral areas.

Therefore, I see no difficulty in adopting the amendment, which should be regarded as technical because it brings the legislation into line with the adoption of proportional representation. I suspect that the reference to wards in the Bill has been carried forward from earlier legislation when we did not have proportional representation in Northern Ireland. Many of us would love to get rid of it, but, for the purposes of the amendment, we accept its existence and argue that one should operate, as the spirit of the schedule suggests, on the relevant local government boundaries. The relevant local government boundary in Northern Ireland is not a ward boundary, but a district electoral area boundary. Therefore, it is logical to base parliamentary boundaries on those district electoral area boundaries.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I am interested that a Unionist Member should seek further to entrench an arrangement which springs from the unique single transferable voting system in Northern Ireland. Perhaps matters and opinions have moved on in Northern Ireland more speedily than I would have predicted when I was able to take a closer interest in matters in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Trimble:** I do not want the Minister to misunderstand the situation. It is similar to the temporary nature of direct rule. We have to live with the present situation, which causes significant inconvenience in terms of fighting elections, party structure and organisation, and so on. We are not debating our fundamental objection to proportional representation. As for its removal, it would be easy to change back by way of a consequential amendment.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I have always known that there is nothing so permanent as the strictly temporary.

The amendment would substitute, as the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) said, district electoral areas for wards as the basic and generally indivisible building blocks for constituencies in Northern Ireland. I followed his argument that there would be considerable convenience from the point of view of political organisations in Northern Ireland if those district electoral areas were never divided between constituencies, as I believe about 30 are at present. The hon. Gentleman did not mention a figure and I understand that he does not dispute my figure of 30, which is a sizeable number, and I appreciate the inconvenience.

If I understand the situation correctly, in many cases difficulty has arisen because the last reviews were conducted in an unhelpful order. New constituencies were constructed by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in 1982. That was followed by the work of the local government boundaries commissioner, who constructed new wards, some of which crossed the new parliamentary boundaries. Then the district electoral areas were formed, as the 1984 order required, by linking between five and seven wards together.

On this occasion, the sequence is the other way round. The local government boundaries commissioner, as the hon. Member for Upper Bann said, presented on 15 June recommendations for local government boundaries. Should the Secretary of State accept them, with or without modification, they will be incorporated in an order. Recommendations will then follow for the revision, as necessary, of the district electoral areas. Thus, unlike last time, before it reports the parliamentary boundary commission will be able to consider the new local government ward and DEA boundaries before making its recommendations to the Secretary of State.

It is for the boundary commission to decide whether a parliamentary constituency boundary should cross a DEA boundary. I would expect some, perhaps even most, of the difficulties that the hon. Member for Upper Bann outlined

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

to disappear because the parliamentary boundary commission must have regard to local links and other such factors.

As the hon. Gentleman heard in the last debate to which he referred, I am, for a vast variety of practical reasons, reluctant to change rules for the parliamentary commissioner. There is also a great deal of convenience if the building block remains the ward, as it is sufficiently small to make it extremely unlikely that it will need to be sub-divided.

If the basic block were to be the larger DEA of five to seven wards, rule 5 of schedule 2 to the 1986 Act could bite, as in practice it does not bite under the present arrangements because the DEAs are much larger. That would oblige the commissioner to divide a DEA between constituencies if not to do so would, in the commissioner's judgment, produce unacceptable disparities in constituency size.

7.15 pm

**Mr. Trimble:** If that is the Minister's argument for retaining wards in Northern Ireland, why will he not apply the logic of that argument in England and Wales, where they operate with much larger units?

**Mr. Lloyd:** We are retaining wards not as building blocks that may never be split. In fact, they are not split, and the hon. Gentleman will find, if he looks at the reorganisation of constituencies, that wards are units that are put together with other wards from other local authorities to form constituencies that cross local authority boundaries. So in practice they usually are the building blocks. To move to the DEA as the building block would not rule out there being a division of the DEA if those other factors demanded it.

I also pointed out that the divisions that Northern Ireland had experienced in the last decade or so stemmed from the order in which the last reviews were taken. The boundary commission must pay some regard to local authority boundaries and links. But in constructing local authority wards—and, in Northern Ireland, DEAs—the local government commissioner need not have regard for constituency boundaries.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): I understood the Minister's argument to rest on wards not being divided. Some of our wards are divided even to make a DEA, and that is confusing not only for electoral workers but for constituents who believe that they live in a part of the city represented by one Member of Parliament but discover that, when they wish to raise an issue, they must make representations to a different Member of Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) has succeeded in teasing out the issues here at Westminster so that guidance may be given to those who are now drawing up the boundaries.

**Mr. Lloyd:** That is right, and the present unsatisfactory and inconvenient state of affairs exists because, as I said, the boundary commission did its work before the local government boundaries commissioner had done his work. The parliamentary boundary commission must have regard to those factors, but the local government boundaries commissioner need not have regard to parliamentary boundaries. Hence the problem of wards being divided between constituencies. It was the order in which things were done. That is being remedied this time round.

It is up to the boundary commission to decide what it reports, and it will have the opportunity of knowing what the local authority boundaries are. The ward boundaries and DEAs will be known when it produces its proposals for the Secretary of State's consideration. It did not have that advantage on the last occasion. In the new order in which matters will be tackled on this occasion lies the solution, if not to all then at least to a considerable number of the problems that have been outlined.

I cannot say that all the problems will be solved because it is not for me to determine what the boundary commission will recommend. But knowing that that commission will operate with common sense—it is obliged to look at the existing boundaries and take them properly into account—it is likely that the cutting in two of wards will not be a feature of the new arrangement that it recommends.

**Mr. William Ross** (Londonderry, East): Surely it is unreasonable totally to ignore the existence of DEAs in Northern Ireland. They must be mentioned somewhere so that the parties and others concerned with the issue in Northern Ireland can point the commissioner to a particular boundary to which he must give cognisance, even if he need not follow it rigidly.

The present situation is a nonsense and the DEAs are totally ignored by the commissioner in drawing up boundaries. That should not happen. It is a matter of common sense that if we are to apply various boundaries in the United Kingdom generally, the same should apply to all of the United Kingdom. When we talk about boroughs in London, we should also talk about DEAs in Northern Ireland. If the commissioner finds it convenient on some occasions to split DEAs, well and good, but he should have to take notice of their existence.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The boundary commission is required to take notice of links. It is not specifically required to take notice of DEAs and, in the rest of the United Kingdom, for example in England, it is not required to take notice of district council boundaries. Yet much political activity is based, certainly in local government terms, on the district council area.

I understand the complaint about the present position. The boundary commission will be able to deal with it under schedule 2 of the 1986 Act, which makes it clear that it must have regard to those links. Ultimately, however, it must make up its mind, in the light of that schedule, given the need to have constituencies of reasonably equal size.

I cannot provide hon. Gentlemen with a remedy to the problems that they envisage. By accepting the amendment, I would not necessarily be doing so because, ultimately, it is the boundary commission's judgment. Many, if not all, of the problems that the hon. Gentlemen have outlined will be dealt with by the sequence of the reviews of local government, DEAs and parliamentary constituency boundaries. Furthermore, I do not believe that if the change urged on me by the hon. Gentleman were put in place, it would of itself have the beneficial effect that he seeks.

**Mr. Trimble:** The Minister has made much about the commissioner's duty to have regard to local ties. He suggested that, thereby, a regard to DEAs could be

smuggled in. But paragraph 7(b) of the schedule refers to local ties that would be broken by such alterations. That is, alterations consequent on rule 4, which is splitting wards. It does not involve having regard to the DEAs, which are larger units than wards.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The hon. Gentleman could refer to several parts of the schedule. For instance, section 7 says:

"It shall not be the duty of a boundary commission to aim at giving full effect in all circumstances to the above rules but they should take account, so far as they reasonably can, of the inconveniences attendant on alterations of constituency, other than alterations made for the purpose of rule 4, and any local ties which would be broken by such alterations".

So the ties would already have been established by the adjustment, if an adjustment is to be made, of the boundaries of the DEAs. They would exist by the time the boundary commission considered its proposals for parliamentary constituency boundaries.

I shall not satisfy the hon. Gentleman in this debate. He has not convinced me that his amendment would produce the effect that he desires. As I said before, I am loath to introduce changes to the rules under which boundary commissions operate when reviews in various parts of the United Kingdom have gone so far down the track. However, the hon. Gentleman can pin considerable hope on the order in which the reviews will be undertaken and the fact that this time the parliamentary boundary commission for Northern Ireland will take into account the arrangements being made for local government and DEAs.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** I understand the Minister's point in response to my hon. Friend, when he admitted that he had not convinced him. Will he rely on the common sense of the commissioners? I was taught by professors that common sense is the most uncommon of all the senses. I wonder whether we can rest revision on such a statement or whether the Minister will support his colleagues and restore the single member constituency. We would then be the same as the rest of the United Kingdom and would not have all those problems.

**Mr. Lloyd:** That lies outside my power under the Bill. The commissioners have taken a considerable battering this afternoon but the hon. Gentleman's assault was more delicate and feline than the others that we have heard. We can rely on the common sense of the Ministers and must do so because they understand the existing rules and must put forward their recommendations. This time they will put them forward for Northern Ireland with the knowledge of what has been proposed for local government in Northern Ireland. That was not the case when the present boundaries were drawn up.

**Mr. Trimble:** I am not convinced by what the Minister has said, but we do not intend to press the amendment to a Division. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Clause 3, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 4 and 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Bill reported, with amendments.*

*As amended, to be considered tomorrow.*

## PROTECTION OF BADGERS BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*To be read a Second time tomorrow.*

## TRADE UNION AND LABOUR RELATIONS (CONSOLIDATION) BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*To be read a Second time tomorrow.*

## TRIBUNALS AND INQUIRIES BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*To be read a Second time tomorrow.*

# Criminal Law

7.27 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack):** I beg to move,

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (Designated Countries and Territories) (Amendment) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 9th June, be approved.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** It may be for the convenience of the House to know that with this order we shall take the second order:

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Amendment) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 9th June, be approved.

**Mr. Jack:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for that clarification.

This Order in Council signals our determination to press ahead with measures to strengthen international co-operation against drug trafficking. The Government put around £½ billion a year into efforts to tackle drug misuse. The steps that we are taking today are just one example of our resolve to tackle drug misuse on the international front. In recent years, we have made great advances in our ability to deal with the drug problem at the international level. Our investigators are using ever more sophisticated equipment and techniques. We are at the forefront of efforts to improve international co-operation. We have been very active in our support of international organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. We have also given encouragement to other countries in their efforts to deal with the problem, including the provision of equipment, financial support, and the sharing of expertise.

Last year, we ratified both the 1988 United Nations convention against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances—more commonly known as the Vienna convention—and the 1959 European convention on mutual assistance in criminal matters. Those events marked a significant step forward in our ability to co-operate with other countries in international investigations and criminal proceedings. The Vienna convention provides a framework for countries to co-operate on, among other things, the tracing, freezing and confiscating of the assets of drug traffickers. Even before the convention took shape, the United Kingdom had embarked on the creation of a network of bilateral agreements on the tracing, restraint and confiscation of assets. That exercise was made possible by our strong confiscatory powers—contained in the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986—which are an important part of our anti-drugs strategy, both domestically and internationally. We now have 25 such agreements, and the network is constantly expanding.

Our powers to restrain and confiscate proceeds may be extended only to countries which have been designated by Order in Council. By bringing forward such orders, we are able to keep up to date the designation of countries which have ratified the Vienna convention, or with which we have concluded a bilaterial confiscation agreement in the recent past. The House has already approved several such orders, and we have now designated a total of 51 countries and territories. Like its predecessor, which the House approved in June 1991, the present order has its legal basis in section 26 of the 1986 Act. As before, it simply amends the original order made under the 1986 Act by adding to the list of countries designated in that order. The new countries are named in the schedule to the order.

The House will no doubt be aware that asset seizure legislation is a highly complex and technical sector of the law; even more so in the international context. Drug traffickers are constantly looking for more sophisticated ways of concealing their ill-gotten gains. We must do all that we can to stay ahead of their efforts and block any avenues which are open to them. The order has that purpose in mind. First, it will enable us to implement the bilateral agreements that we have recently negotiated with a further four countries—Argentina, Germany, Guyana and Uruguay. Secondly, it will ensure that we continue to comply with our international obligations under the Vienna convention by designating those countries which have decided to ratify the convention since the last amending order.

The order is made in the spirit of reciprocity, and it is understood that the countries designated would be able to offer to us the same powers in return. It will enable us to enforce requests from any of the countries listed in the schedule to freeze and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking. By proceeds, we mean the traffickers' profits in all their guises—cash, property, investments and so on. Perhaps I should mention here that the other order, which I shall be moving shortly, will enable us to do the same as regards instruments used in drug trafficking—such as cars, boats or aircraft—as this order enables us to do for proceeds.

A Scottish equivalent of this order is being laid separately. A separate order in respect of the enforcement of confiscation orders in Northern Ireland is not required; any country which is designated under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act for England and Wales is automatically designated for Northern Ireland.

To make the legislation effective, we have established a single system to handle all requests from overseas to restrain and confiscate assets. At the centre of this system is the United Kingdom central authority, a department in the Home Office which receives and dispatches requests for mutual legal assistance. The central authority acts as the point of contact between equivalent overseas authorities and the prosecutors in this country who will put foreign requests before the courts for enforcement. When the central authority receives a request from a designated country, it checks its acceptability and passes it immediately to the national criminal intelligence service. A unit within NCIS then co-ordinates our response to the request. In practice, the NCIS will arrange for either the Crown prosecution service or customs prosecutors to carry out the necessary enforcement action in the High Court. When dealing with requests from the additional countries designated in the orders, the courts will be exercising a general discretion in deciding whether or not to comply with the request. An order from a foreign court will not be enforced unless it is clear that it has been properly made. Safeguards exist to protect the rights and liberties of the accused or convicted person and the rights of third parties who may be affected by the enforcement process.

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): Before the new regulations take effect, may I ask how much money, if any, has been received under the old order as a result of confiscation seizures?

**Mr. Jack:** As far as I am aware, the latest cumulative figure for orders under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act is £35 million, about £10 million of which has already been recovered. We also have moneys gifted to us under the seized assets fund, which runs parallel to those arrangements.

**Mr. Steen:** What actually happens to that money? Is it used for a specific purpose or does it just go into the fund? *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Jack:** The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) tries to anticipate my response. The larger sum of money goes to the Consolidated Fund and contributes towards the £500 million that goes towards the Government's overall fight against drugs. Money that goes into the seized assets fund can be used for a number of schemes to further the fight against drugs, including the purchase of sophisticated computer equipment to assist us in that work. If my hon. Friend wants further details, I shall be pleased to write to him.

In the case of restraint orders, the High Court will want to be sure that proceedings have been or are to be instituted in the foreign jurisdiction. No property will be restrained unless there is a realistic prospect of a confiscation order following.

A restraint order must be notified to any person affected by it. All those affected have a right to apply at any time for the order to be varied or discharged. No property may be realised in satisfaction of a confiscation order unless people with an interest in it have had an opportunity to make representations to the court. Those are essentially the same conditions as those applying to restraint, confiscation and forfeiture in domestic proceedings. The House can therefore be assured that due care has been taken to uphold the proper standards of justice which everyone in this country is entitled to expect.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Huddersfield is replying. I know that he fully supported the drug trafficking legislation when the previous order was debated in Committee in June 1991. I sincerely hope that we can rely on his continuing support for this and future orders, whether they are taken in Standing Committee or on the Floor of the House.

I commend the order to the House.

7.38 pm

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): It gives me pleasure to support the Government on this occasion. The Opposition have always supported measures which aim to prevent international drug traffickers salting away their ill-gotten gains so that even long prison sentences seem relatively rewarding. If a drug trafficker is put in prison for 10 or even 15 years, the colossal sums involved may make some of the offenders think that it is worthwhile to spend such periods in custody. We want to prevent the salting away of the proceeds of the evil trade.

It would be remiss of the Opposition not to mention one or two matters tonight. I intend to prod the Minister for some clarification as to how the orders will work and how they will impinge on the other changes to which he alluded—agreements entered into since the last time we held such a debate.

The orders were introduced under the affirmative procedure, deriving from the 1986 Act. The Minister was kind enough to remind us that even at that time, when I was not involved, the legislation had the Opposition's support. We debated similar orders in May 1990 and again in June 1991. On both occasions, I debated the subject with the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). It was necessary at the time to add further countries to the list, since when another four have appeared on it—they are the whole point of this procedure.

I draw the Minister's attention to a press release issued by his predecessor shortly after our last debate. A Home Office press release, it is dated 29 August 1991 and entitled, "United Kingdom ratifies European convention on international crime". The convention was an important step forward. In our previous debates, the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon anticipated a broader and more integrated structure in Europe for dealing with international drug trafficking and fraud. The fact that the convention would be signed was seen as important. In August 1991 the European convention described in the press release was ratified. It will radically increase co-operation between countries in the fight against international crime.

How does the convention impinge on the orders? We had looked for increased co-operation from the country closest to us, France. France is not designated in the orders, but it is a signatory to the European convention. Germany, which this evening is being added to the list of bilaterals, is already a member of the European convention on international crime, but we still have no bilateral agreement with France.

I tried to discover from the Minister's predecessor why we needed bilateral agreements with European countries once the convention came into force. We have signed that convention, yet we now add Germany to the bilateral list and France is still missing. There may be a simple answer to this question, but I hope that the Minister will give us it.

**Mr. Steen:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all European Community countries should automatically be part of the campaign to rid us of drugs? Is it not extraordinary that any country should choose not to co-operate? Should not the Minister lean heavily on such a country at the Council of Ministers?

**Mr. Sheerman:** That is precisely my point. I am fundamentally pro-European, so I did not want to call one of our great partners in Europe any names if I had misjudged its position. In our previous debates it was said that France has a different legal tradition; it has Roman law. We have common law, so extradition treaties are complicated and necessitate changes in domestic legislation.

The convention was signed in the summer of 1991 and came into effect in January 1992, so it has been in effect since only the start of this year. Perhaps the official Opposition are being rather dim on this occasion, but we still require an answer to my earlier question.

In earlier debates, we discussed the effectiveness of tracking down international criminals. Sometimes our

*[Mr. Sheerman]*

discussion ranged more widely, covering the increasing problem of international crime. The signing of the European convention certainly marks a healthy change, and more than 50 countries have joined the bilateral list—but do not we need to go further than treaties and bilateral agreements? Do not we need to get our hands dirty by taking on international criminals across Europe? Trevi, for instance, is important in this context. Germany seems to be adopting a more positive attitude than we are to Europol, believing that it can be used as a positive force to combat international drug crimes in particular. My impression is that Germany wants Europol to have a dedicated operational arm dealing with international drug traffickers; Britain, by contrast, seems to be dragging its feet. We say that we do not mind it having a role as an international intelligence gathering service—but no more. We should emulate the German approach to Europol.

The Minister's predecessor, discussing the convention and comparing it with these sorts of order, stated:

"This convention, together with the legislation we have introduced in order to ratify it, provides a very valuable weapon in the fight against international crime—particularly fraud and drug dealing."

It is interesting that the Minister coupled fraud with drug crime. A certain newspaper empire cannot be discussed at present because the matter is sub judice, but fraud is alleged to have been perpetrated within it and money is alleged to have been salted away in European countries. There is a parallel to be drawn between methods of hunting down the ill-gotten gains from drugs and those from fraud. How would the two activities be dealt with under the convention or under the bilateral agreements?

I see that the list of signatories to the convention includes Liechtenstein and Switzerland. I often get the impression that when we are chasing the Mr. Bigs, the real criminals, the top people who have made millions of pounds out of both drugs and fraud, their money goes to safe havens in Liechtenstein and Switzerland and we cannot retrieve it.

We have a convention with which the Minister's predecessor was pleased. A press release stated that the United Kingdom had ratified the European convention on international crime, a convention that would help us with the

"fight against international crime—particularly fraud and drug dealing."

The press release then goes into detail. It states that the convention will

"make it possible to serve on individuals in the UK summonses and other judicial documents . . . empower the UK courts to seek assistance from overseas authorities in obtaining evidence for use in investigations . . . provide for UK prisoners to be temporarily transferred overseas . . . enable courts in the UK to authorise the police to exercise powers of search and seizure for evidence, on behalf of other countries; and provide for the enforcement in the UK of overseas court orders for the forfeiture of items used in the commission of serious offences."

If that means anything, a plain person's logic will cause the following questions to be asked: "Why cannot we get our hands on money that is salted away in Liechtenstein and Switzerland, whether by newspaper barons or by drug traffickers? If we have a European convention, why cannot we get our hands on money that has been derived from crime? Why is that not possible if we have bilateral agreements with some of those countries, if not all of them?"

I hope that I have not strayed too far from the matters which are before us. I believe that I have raised an important issue and I shall seek to drive home the point. When the Minister's predecessor discussed these matters in 1990, he produced a good example. In my usual style, I said that I did not fully comprehend these matters in theoretical terms. I then asked whether he could give me an example of what actually happened. The Minister replied:

"A request would be made by our central authority in the Home Office—we should be notified of the criminal's existence—to the equivalent in the Ministry of the Interior, or the Ministry of Justice, in Spain, Switzerland, the United States, or whatever, for the property in their respective jurisdiction to be restrained. This is stage one. While criminal proceedings are underway, we do not want the money to flip out of the relevant jurisdiction. Therefore, the first step is to obtain a restraining order, pending the outcome of the criminal proceedings."

The right hon. Gentleman then said:

"As soon as criminal proceedings and the committal stage begin in this country, our central authority would act quickly and say, We believe that Mr. X or Mrs. Y has property in your country. A trial is pending and we wish those assets to be frozen. At the same time we should seek to put a restraint on assets owned by the accused in the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report, Third Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.*, 16 May 1990, c. 6.]

Is that the procedure that is now established, whether for drugs or fraud, and is it being implemented in highly publicised cases? I would go to sleep much easier tonight if I knew that the assets salted away in Switzerland or Liechtenstein by whoever would not disappear somewhere else during the period preceding a long trial. I hope that I have made my point and that I have kept in order.

Our purpose is to assess the effectiveness of the order and those which have preceded it. I was pleased when the hon. Member for south Hants——

**Mr. Steen:** South Hams.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The hon. Gentleman changed his constituency. I remember his previous constituency rather than his present one.

When the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) intervened and said, in effect, "How much money?", I was disappointed by the Minister's response. Almost two years ago we were talking about £27 million. Given the estimates of international drug crime, the profits that flow from it, the amount by which it is growing and the sums that are being made by international criminal syndicates, it seems that the tip of the iceberg with which we are dealing is not becoming larger at the pace that we might expect. I am concerned that we are not dealing with the sort of sum with which I would have expected us to deal at this stage.

Perhaps that reinforces my argument that we need to take a much more effective stance to buttress the order by having a much more positive agreement with others, through Trevi or Schengen, to ensure that the fight against international drug crime and the international fraudster becomes much more effective. I shall introduce the only sour note this evening by saying that we are not doing enough. International drug crime is growing rapidly and we know that the problem is becoming worse. Are we not becoming a little too complacent about our effectiveness in the fight against the international criminal?

We support the order because we will support anything that is designed to stem the flood of drugs into the United

Kingdom, but should we not consider other methods of achieving that purpose? I know that the Minister and his ministerial colleagues have a dialogue with colleagues in other Departments who are responsible for shedding 400 Customs and Excise officers over two years—a 10 per cent. cut. The order will have all-party agreement, but it is important to recognise that the most effective way of stopping drugs coming into the country is through Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. The police rarely manage to get hold of any substantial quantities of drugs. That is the truth. I have asked parliamentary questions about that matter and I think that the Minister will agree with what I have said.

It is the staff of Customs and Excise who at points of entry—ports and airports—apprehend and mark up major victories against international drug traffickers. I hope that the Minister will take that on board. I hope also that he understands that he has the Opposition's complete support for anything that will stop the international drug criminal. I trust that my remarks have demonstrated the fullness of that support.

7.57 pm

**Mr. Tim Rathbone** (Lewes): It will be with pleasure that I take up one or two remarks of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)—I endorse most of his arguments—in my short contribution to the debate.

I welcome the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), to the Government Dispatch Box. I believe that this is his first appearance to talk about the extremely important subject that is before the House. I wish him well in all his efforts on behalf of the Government and of every person living in the United Kingdom.

I have the honour to be chairman of the all-party drugs misuse group, which has supported the Government in their efforts, most particularly in the two pieces of major legislation to which reference has already been made—the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which was designed to confiscate illegally gained assets, and the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, to allow the seizure of the tools of crime and their disposal following seizure. I welcome the extensions of the Acts to embrace Argentina, Germany, Guyana and Uruguay. I look forward to further amendments to broaden the embrace of the bilateral agreements that we have struck.

That brings me to my first question. Can my hon. Friend the Minister anticipate any further steps in the imminent future to increase the number of bilaterals which have been struck with, for instance, countries which are such important suppliers of the raw materials of drugs that are misused in Britain and reassure the House on their necessity? I immediately think of countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, India and Syria.

Closer to home, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield mentioned, there are those members of the EC, those signatories of the Vienna convention, with whom we ought to have bilaterals in order to be sure that we can take the steps that we want to take and have them take the steps that they should take on our behalf and on our mutual behalf.

Can my hon. Friend the Minister confirm that the legislation and the orders which allow the British criminal justice system to enforce requests by those other countries included in the orders are entirely reciprocal? Do those countries which we are discussing this evening and other countries which have been included in the legislation by previous amendments behave in a reciprocal way? Have they passed the relevant legislation needed so that they can do so? If not, can my hon. Friend reassure the House that they have the process in hand? I am aware that that process is long and drawn out—longer and more drawn out in some of those countries than in Britain.

There is no doubt in anybody's mind, in the House or outside, that vigorous tackling of trafficking in drugs and crime associated with it is a crucial part of the Government's well-directed efforts to meet the growing menace of drug misuse. As the hon. Member for Huddersfield said, it is, tragically, a growing problem.

The number of addicts has doubled in the past four years. The number of drug offenders under the age of 17 has quadrupled, and that is largely due to amphetamines and cocaine and new drugs such as Ecstasy, which is a class A dangerous drug. There are signs that between one in 10 and one in 25 between the ages of 15 and 30 have used Ecstasy at least once, causing 14 tragic deaths last year.

Like others, I praise the police and customs at home. In addition, a marvellous job is being done by British drugs liaison officers around the world. They particularly deserve our praise because they sometimes operate in extremely dangerous circumstances. I also commend British support for, and for many years leadership of, the Council of Europe Pompidou group. That has been admirable. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will continue to play as vital and vigorous a part in it as his predecessor in the responsibilities that he now holds.

I also want to mention the successful British initiative to establish Europol. Unlike the hon. Member for Huddersfield, I rather doubt whether in present or foreseeable circumstances it is wise to consider Europol as an operational entity. But there is no doubt that, as a central source of intelligence, it is excellent and admirable. In the same context, the establishment and operation of the drugs intelligence unit here at home has also been important.

There is a further question that I want to raise, not precisely pertinent to the orders but which I hope I shall be allowed to mention, and that is the question which still remains about the central organisation of anti-drugs police activities in Britain. There is still room for centralised operation and control. So long as that operational unit, built up into a substantial force and divided from other forces, is composed of people seconded from existing police forces rather than building its own recruitment and training, it should be able to overcome the natural worries of chief police officers.

Moneys raised from confiscations make a marvellous contribution to many aspects of the Government's efforts to tackle drug misuse, but there is still a peculiar divide between assets fed in from abroad, which can be used specifically by those fighting against drugs, and those assets which are seized within Britain, which go into the Consolidated Fund.

I plead with the Minister yet again—this point has been made over and over again—to tackle his colleagues in the Treasury to try to obtain specific identification of those funds and channel them back not to the forces which seized them, because that would be indiscriminate, but to all the various efforts not only in trafficking and criminal control, but in treatment, and so on, which so desperately

*[Mr. Tim Rathbone]*

need extra funds. They should be looked upon as extra funds, not as part of a substitution for funds which the Government already make available.

I commend the Government on what has been achieved and on their continuing efforts. There is still room to do more and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will allow me and other members of the all-party group to keep reminding him about that, not just in tackling trafficking, but in reducing production and improving methods and availability of treatment and, most important of all at the end of the day, in reducing demand.

Britain has given a genuine lead to other countries in the fight against drug misuse and I hope that we shall remain in the lead by ever-expanding efforts which include the measures that we are discussing today.

8.6 pm

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): It is a pleasure to see many of my hon. Friends present for a debate on a matter which obviously is of concern to the whole House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) has taken a particular interest in this subject. He was a member of the Third Standing Committee on 16 May 1990 which debated it. It is good to see that his interest has sustained all these years. No doubt he will make one of his excellent contributions shortly.

I have only three points to make. First, I am concerned about the countries which have been added to the list of countries under the reciprocal arrangement. Many countries are missing and I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Minister can explain why. For example, many of the West Indies are not on the list. I have just come back from Trinidad as a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation. It admits that it has an increasing drug problem. Why is it not on the list? Why is Barbados not on the list? I know that a Barbados Minister has visited Britain. I cannot see Holland anywhere. Am I wrong? Is it excluded from the reciprocal arrangement? When my hon. Friend replies, will he tell us why some countries are missing, particularly some of the important countries which admit that they have a drug problem?

My second point concerns money. It is right that some of the money should go to defray the costs of the drug enforcement procedures. The rest of the money is lost in the Consolidated Fund and none, as my hon. Friend explained, goes to the many voluntary groups which try to fight drug abuse and the quasi-organisations which the Government fund through other sources. They do not receive any specific money. The Government should specifically identify money coming from drugs and the drug barons and put it back into preventive work rather than just enforcement work or the drug intelligence unit. It would be a useful and constructive step for the Government to ensure that ill-gotten gains were put into preventing drug abuse. My constituency includes part of the English riviera, but I much regret that the drug Ecstasy is readily available there. In fact, parents in Brixham say that their children can obtain Ecstasy cheaper and more easily than a Devon cream tea—and everyone knows how readily available cream teas are in the constituency that I have the privilege to represent.

Not enough preventive work is being undertaken or funded by the Government. I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to consider whether the proceeds derived from drug barons should go towards helping community groups and other voluntary organisations—such as those found in Brixham, where a concerned group of parents are themselves funding a voluntary effort to prevent any growth in the ready availability of Ecstasy. I hope that my hon. Friend can give an assurance that money seized from drug trafficking does not get lost in the bottomless pit of the Consolidated Fund, and that more of it will be used specifically to fund voluntary work.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Mr. Malcolm Jack.

8.11 pm

**Mr. Jack:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for rechristening me. I am sure that my parents will be very interested to learn of my new name!

I will do my best to respond to the interesting points made by the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), including his remarks about European co-operation. I believe that they were directed at the European convention on mutual legal assistance, which was covered by the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990. It was introduced to enhance our ability to extend mutual legal assistance to countries requiring help in the fight against drugs and serious crime. Its powers are different from those provided by the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, which concentrated on freezing and confiscating proceeds.

The 1990 Act enables people to travel abroad to give evidence, gives powers to take evidence and to obtain documents, and provides for police assistance in respect of powers of search and seizure and in serving court documents.

Good relationships have been established between our law enforcement authorities and those of other European countries, which assists us in our investigations. I was pleased that the hon. Member for Huddersfield placed emphasis on European co-operation. He will be aware of the Council of Europe convention to which the United Kingdom is a signatory. We hope to be in the lead in ratifying that convention, which will provide a comprehensive range of powers for dealing with many of the matters that the hon. Member for Huddersfield mentioned. I hope that it will receive widespread support. Taken together with the Vienna convention and the bilateral arrangements that form the basis of the orders, the Council of Europe convention will represent a comprehensive response.

France is already designated under the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986, so we can co-operate fully with that country in tracing, freezing, and confiscating proceeds. We can also provide a wide range of mutual legal assistance under the 1990 Act. In no way are we leaving France out of the picture.

In responding to the hon. Gentleman's remarks about Liechtenstein, I shall try not to stray too far from the substance of the orders. We have powers to investigate financial fraud both in this country and abroad, and they are adequate in respect of Liechtenstein. The 1990 Act enables us to extend a full range of mutual legal assistance. In addition, Department of Trade and Industry investigators have powers of their own under the Financial Services Act 1986. Work can also be undertaken by

Serious Fraud Office investigators under the Criminal Justice Act 1987. Liechtenstein should not present any barrier.

**Mr. Sheerman:** I mentioned a particular example cited by the Minister's predecessor. When a court case is just beginning, do the authorities have the power to freeze assets in Liechtenstein or Switzerland fast—so that they do not disappear to some other part of the world? My understanding of the convention and of the orders is that they make that possible. However, one reads in the national and international press of concerns that moneys disappear to different destinations before trials are concluded and anyone is sentenced.

**Mr. Jack:** The hon. Gentleman's question requires a detailed response, but I will make a general reply. The arrangements contained in the orders will enable us to move very quickly. Once we know that a country wants to exercise its rights, an ex parte application can be made to the High Court to restrain the movement of assets, provided that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting drug trafficking. The whole idea is, as the hon. Gentleman says, to get in quickly. I assure him that such a mechanism exists.

**Mr. Sheerman:** A press release issued by the Minister's predecessor dated 29 August 1991 said that the convention —which the Minister said is part of the weaponry against the drug trafficker—mentions also the international fraudster. If a drugs or fraud trial commences in this country, will the arrangements that we have with Liechtenstein and Switzerland allow the authorities to freeze the accused's assets now rather than at some time in the future?

**Mr. Jack:** As I explained, I answered in general terms —but I undertake to write to the hon. Gentleman about the specific arrangements relating to Liechtenstein and Switzerland. Meanwhile, I assure him that speed is of the essence. I also refer the hon. Gentleman to the written answer that I gave the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), reported in column *78* of the *Official Report* for 9 June.

**Mr. Steen:** Do the arrangements that my hon. Friend the Minister mentioned in respect of France apply also to Holland? I see no mention of that country in any of the lists.

**Mr. Jack:** I hope to deal with Holland in a moment. If I do not, I shall ensure that my hon. Friend receives an answer in due course.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield asked about our international arrangements in relation to money laundering. Our own arrangements—which are clearly internationally based—have been reviewed by the Group of Seven financial action task force, an ad hoc group set up about three years ago. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will derive some comfort from the fact that a report that we have just received from its examining team concludes that our approach to money laundering is effective and comprehensive, and could serve as a model for other countries. That, surely, is encouraging.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about our approach to crimes other than drug trafficking. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 empowers us to confiscate the proceeds of serious crimes; those powers can be used on behalf of other countries, subject to the designation procedure.

**Mr. Sheerman:** The Minister mentioned the G7 appraisal. I am sure that everyone knows that our methods are becoming pretty good. The trouble is that an international drug trafficker or fraudster with any sense will no longer put his ill-gotten gains into British banks. Since the dramatic changes that have taken place in the London banking climate, and the enactment of legislation, the international criminal has put his money in other parts of the world. The efficiency of our war against such crimes should be measured not by how good it is in London, but by how good we are at gaining access to other banking capitals. What does G7 say about that?

**Mr. Jack:** G7 commented on our own problems rather than the problems in other countries to which we have no access. The hon. Gentleman, who plainly understands these matters, will know that at the heart of our ability to counteract money laundering in connection with drugs is the reporting of unusual transactions within our own banking system. I have visited the national criminal intelligence service, and have observed the degree of international co-operation that exists, in terms of both contact and manpower. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that a sophisticated and dedicated fight is being waged against those who benefit from the entry of suspicious moneys into the United Kingdom, and that that fight is succeeding.

We are aware that some areas, such as British dependent territories, require upgrading. A great deal of work has been done to ensure that places such as the Caribbean can comply in legislative terms, and that they operate legislation similar to ours.

If the hon. Gentleman had read the terms of the Vienna convention, he would have noted that countries that sign the convention—their number is increasing almost daily —must be able to reciprocate in terms of their own legislation. We must have reciprocal arrangements to confiscate the proceeds of money laundering. Although I would not say that there is a worldwide uniformity of approach, our targeting approach—for example, the process by which we decide whether we wish to go further than the conventions by negotiating bilateral arrangements—focuses on the need for workable solutions. This is not a "sloganising" exercise to extol the virtues of our actions; we take the position very seriously, and where there are loopholes to be plugged we try hard to assist the process.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Customs officers. Let me pay tribute to their achievements in regard to the enforcement and seizure record. It is a proud record; theirs is unstinting and dangerous work, and I am sure that the House will join me in congratulating them. I was grateful for the tone of what the hon. Gentleman said: he was right to probe, and I assure him that I shall remain vigilant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who chairs the all-party group on drug misuse, made a telling contribution. I congratulate him on his continuing dedication and interest in the subject; we have met, and I have listened carefully to the views that he has advanced on behalf of the all-party group. As a

*[Mr. Jack]*

long-standing member of the Council of Europe, he will no doubt appreciate some of my comments about wider European legislation and co-operation.

My hon. Friend asked about the policy on increasing the number of bilaterals. We are working hard to identify further countries in this regard, and to find the best way of co-operating. In time, more bilaterals will certainly be announced. We consider them to be very important in operational terms: they help to secure a smooth conclusion to any inquiries that are made, and any prosecutions that have begun, under the terms of the orders. Here I pick up a point made by the hon. Member for Huddersfield. When bilaterals are in place we can have good working relationships, which are vital if we are to be quick off the mark.

I agreed with what my hon. Friend said about the Pompidou group, and with what he said about the national criminal intelligence service. As I have seen, serving police officers—as my hon. Friend pointed out, they are sometimes seconded from other forces—are working extremely hard to make the sophisticated fight against drugs succeed. I am sure that my hon. Friend's observations about the use of assets seized in connection with drugs activity will not go unnoticed by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I hope that he will be reassured by my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen): good use is being made of the seized-assets fund.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams asked about missing countries. I assure him that nations involved in this work are not wandering around the world like Marie Celeste, seeking an opportunity. He specifically mentioned Trinidad. I can tell him that officials from the United Kingdom and the Trinidad Government have been holding detailed discussions about a bilateral agreement; further progress awaits the completion of Trinidad's domestic legislation. I hope very much that bilateral arrangements will soon be in place. As I told my hon. Friend earlier, a good deal of work is going on in the Caribbean to strengthen legislation in the British dependent territories.

**Mr. Sheerman:** As the Minister will know, I agree with the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) about missing countries. We need bilateral arrangements with them. But what about the missing Customs officers? The Minister paid tribute to Customs officers, but he did not mention the reduction of 200—10 per cent.—in their number. Where are they now, and will he ask for them to be returned to their jobs?

**Mr. Jack:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman has at least noted the effectiveness of the Customs operation. As I said at the beginning of the debate, the Government are putting £500 million into the fight against drugs. We take the matter very seriously, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises that we have done our best to equip those engaged in that fight in a way that enables them to carry out their task.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): Is the Minister aware that the number of Customs officers engaged on anti-smuggling operations at Birmingham and Coventry airports has been halved? That undermines his claims about an effective Government response to drug trafficking. It cannot be effective if Government policy does not interrelate with the areas under discussion.

**Mr. Jack:** I was trying hard to avoid hiding behind the excuse of a Minister at the Dispatch Box for not answering the question, but the hon. Member for Huddersfield has supplied me with the answer: the Home Office is not directly responsible for the Customs service. The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) may have studied in some detail the effectiveness of drugs enforcement at the two airports that he mentioned. If he has reservations, I strongly recommend that he writes to the Treasury Minister directly responsible for Customs. In general terms, seizure figures show the overall effectiveness of Customs work. Customs officers would tell the hon. Gentleman that effective Customs work relies heavily on good intelligence sources. The hon. Gentleman will have heard me refer to the national criminal intelligence unit at Scotland Yard and the excellent contribution that it is making.

**Mr. Steen:** As I represent 88 miles of south Devon coastline, I pay tribute to Customs officers and say how much their work is appreciated. They have seized millions of pounds worth of drugs on yachts that entered ports on the south Devon coast. Although the number of seizures has decreased, the amounts that they have seized have increased. The sophisticated devices that they use show that men are being replaced by machines rather effectively.

**Mr. Jack:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's endorsement of my comments about the effectiveness of the Customs service.

Comment has been made about the use of the seized assets fund. We have spent some of that money on projects to counteract drug misuse. Indeed, 147 projects have benefited from the disbursement of funds. The fight against drugs has been enhanced. Computers have been purchased for Customs, encrypted radios have been purchased for the police and we have funded drug rehabilitation schemes, educational materials, needle disposal projects and fast launches for overseas customs services.

We have tried hard to strengthen the fight against drugs at home and abroad. I urge the House to support the orders.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (Designated Countries and Territories) (Amendment) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 9th June, be approved.

*Resolved,*

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Amendment) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 9th June, be approved.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

## Members' Interests (Reports)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

8.33 pm

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): Given the limited time available for the debate, it would be wrong of me to open it with a long speech going through the recommendations of the two reports in detail. I regret the shortage of time, because the two reports are on separate and distinct issues and contain some complicated proposals. I shall give hon. Members the credit for having read the reports and of being familiar with the main points in question.

I believe that there is now general acceptance in the House of the principle that underlines the need for rules, registration and declaration of Members' financial interests. In his evidence to the Select Committee, Mr. Speaker Weatherill rightly said that there is a presumption that all Members are honourable Members. The register is not intended to cast doubt on that presumption; indeed, it is intended to reinforce it.

The House agreed to the introduction of the register in 1974-75 not because it believed that there was a significant problem of corruption among Members, but because of the belief in the need for openness or transparency in a representative democracy. In the absence of that openness, rumour and innuendo can flourish, particularly in the media.

Our behaviour and sense of integrity are important to all hon. Members, but the public perception of Members' interests and behaviour is also important. Nobody enjoys filling in the form and remembering to keep the register up to date, but I am confident that almost all Members now acknowledge the need for these procedures.

The register is a valuable protection for all hon. Members and it provides information that the public and fellow hon. Members have a reasonable right to know.

Against that background, I should like to look first at the larger of the two reports under discussion, which deals with the rules of registration and declaration. The origin of the report was the unhappy case that the House debated in March 1990. At the end of the debate, the House instructed the Select Committee on Members' Interests to review some of the general issues that the case had highlighted. When we conducted the review, we found, above all, that many hon. Members were uncertain what should be registered under the different headings laid down by the original Committee and the House in 1975.

At the same time, we were made aware of the feeling among outside commentators that the register is less informative than it should be and that there is some inconsistency of approach between Members when compiling entries. The Committee's primary objective has been to clarify the rules and to give hon. Members more explicit guidance on the registration of their interests in the future.

Some of the guidance is incorporated in the new and more detailed registration form proposed in annex 1 of the report. More detailed advice is contained in the body of the report. In part, our aim has been to standardise best current practice. I will give one example. One or two hon. Members already include in their entries a brief indication of the business of a company with which they are associated, but many do not. The consequence is that a Member may register that he is a director of, say, Jones plc, but the reader of the register is no wiser unless he is told what Jones plc does. We propose that it should become standard practice for all hon. Members to include an explanation of that sort in their entries, and our recommendation about the registration of Lloyd's syndicates has a similar objective.

The Committee was concerned to make the rules more precise and thus to assist the Registrar in advising Members on the content of their entries. For example, the Committee proposed that detailed financial limits should be stipulated above which gifts, benefits or hospitality should be registered so that Members should not be obliged to register every trifling courtesy which sometimes comes their way.

There are relatively few proposals in the report which I would regard as substantial modifications of the rules, but I will draw the House's attention to one or two which some may think come into that category. We propose that the leading sponsors of an early-day motion should be required to draw attention to any relevant pecuniary interest by means of a note on the notice paper.

We also propose a change to the rule about the registration of shareholdings. Under the current rules, hon. Members are required to register only shareholdings in excess of 1 per cent. of the issued share capital of a company. The consequence is that substantial holdings in very large companies generally escape registration. The Committee therefore proposes that, in line with proposals made by the Government for local councillors, hon. Members should also be required to register any shareholding which has a nominal value in excess of £25,000. There are also other modest proposals in the report which I shall not itemise because this is a short debate.

As the minutes of our proceedings revealed, we were not able to avoid divisions entirely. Two issues caused us particular difficulty, but the Committee's discussion took place in the run-up to the general election when political tensions in the House were running high. Nevertheless, I pay tribute to my fellow members of the Committee—I am delighted to see that a considerable number are here tonight—for the constructive and co-operative spirit in which the discussions were conducted despite the distractions.

The first issue to cause us difficulty was the category of the existing form headed "Sponsorship". The 1974 Committee seems to have intended that category to apply only to the institutionalised arrangements whereby trade unions sponsored the candidacies and constituency parties of Labour Members of Parliament. Unfortunately, it did not attempt to define the term "sponsorship". Labour hon. Members now feel, with some justification, that that particular playing field is not entirely level and that there are other forms of regular financial support which are equally worthy of disclosure. The formulation in paragraphs 48 to 51 of the report is a compromise. Like most compromises, it is unlikely to satisfy anyone completely, but it is fair and it is an advance on the present vague heading.

The other issue to provoke disagreement was whether amounts of remuneration should be disclosed in the register. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) may wish to pursue that issue later. The correct balance between the need for transparency and the individual's entitlement to a reasonable degree of privacy

*[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]*

is a difficult one to strike. The majority of the Committee saw no advantage in the disclosure of amounts of remuneration. They thought that it was not a reasonable guide to the influence that a financial interest may exert on an hon. Member because a sum that is significant to one hon. Member may be relatively insignificant to another. In any case, we must always bear it in mind that, unlike Ministers or local authority councillors, hon. Members do not have direct executive responsibilities. Therefore, on balance, we considered that the change would be an unjustified intrusion into privacy.

I stress that, although some members of the Committee would have liked certain issues to be included in the report which were not included, there was widespread agreement about what is in the report. Taken as a whole, the proposals represent a distinct step forward, and I hope that the House will support them on that basis.

I deal now with the report relating to Select Committees. Is there any reason why the Chairman and members of Select Committees should be subject to different and more rigorous rules than other hon. Members in respect of their financial interests? There is. We already accept that principle in the case of Ministers. The rules which regulate the financial interests of Ministers are, of course, Government rules rather than House rules, but their existence has served as a reassurance to the House and to the country that Ministers are not able to abuse their positions for personal financial gain.

Unlike Ministers and their Departments, Select Committees do not have powers of executive decision or action, any more than individual hon. Members. However, they perform an increasingly significant role. They have privileged access to information; Committee inquiries are regularly featured on television and individual hon. Members—and especially Committee Chairmen—enjoy a high public profile. I have no criticism of any of those developments—they help the House and do it credit—but, at the same time, they entail a need for particular vigilance to avoid any possible conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived. We consider that a positive code of conduct is now required, as it is, for example, for members of local authorities.

Taken together, the proposals in this report are intended to constitute such a code. That is why we propose that a member of a Select Committee should withdraw from any proceedings where he might reasonably be thought to be in a position to influence any decision from which he or any firm or organisation employing him might obtain a financial benefit. We also propose that anyone elected to the chairmanship of a Department-related Select Committee or the Public Accounts Committee should be required to divest himself of any pecuniary interest which might reasonably be thought to influence his judgment or be advantaged by his position as its Chairman.

In matters of that sort, the House has traditionally been content to rely on the good sense and discretion of individual hon. Members. Generally that is good enough, but not invariably. Clear guidance from the House on what is acceptable and unacceptable, where it can sensibly be given, is preferable to the uncertainties of personal judgment. The limited area of Select Committee activity is one where we think guidance can sensibly be given, and that is the purpose of the report.

To conclude, I shall say one or two words about the implementation of the two reports, which primarily lies within the gift of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. The debate by itself will settle nothing and will change nothing. The report on Select Committees may be of some value as guidance to the Committee of Selection and others in the weeks and months ahead, but unless the report is positively endorsed by the House, that value will be limited: Select Committee Clerks will not be able to call it in aid when asked for advice or a ruling, nor will the Members' Interests Committee be able to call it in aid if confronted with a complaint.

The same is true of the general report on registration and declaration. The existing rules and form of the register were laid down by a resolution of the House which approved the report of the Willey Committee in the Session of 1974-75. Our new report has no status or validity unless or until it is approved to supersede the existing rules.

**Ms. Dawn Primarolo** (Bristol, South): I have listened to the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) but, in view of the importance of the report, why is there no resolution before the House so that we can vote at the end of the debate to give the report's recommendations the necessary status and to enact them?

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** The hon. Lady was a member of the Committee and I am aware of the great contribution that she made to its work. I understand the reasons for her intervention, but her question could be better answered by the Leader of the House.

Although the report has no status unless or until it is approved to supersede the existing rules, much time and trouble has been devoted to it. I hope that with the positive encouragement of two of the Leader of the House's predecessors, it will prove not to have been wasted work. I welcome the debate as far as it goes—this is my best effort to try to meet the hon. Lady's request—but I should welcome it even more if my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House were to make it clear that it is no more than a first stage in the process of implementation. These are difficult and sensitive issues and there is every temptation not to face up to them. My right hon. Friend is widely respected by hon. Members of all parties. I am sure that he will not succumb to that temptation, although, as he is new to his present office, I can understand that he may wish to proceed with caution.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Before I call the Leader of the House, I must tell the House that Madam Speaker wishes it to be known that she has appealed for short speeches.

8.50 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I can respond to some degree to what my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) just said and to Madam Speaker's appeal. I am glad to have been able to repond to the concerns expressed by a number of hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who pressed me for a debate on these matters. I acknowledge that the hon. Member for Bradford, South

expressed some concern about the length of the debate in some exchanges earlier today. At any rate, we have this opportunity, which is important and valuable.

I am also glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden, who opened the debate in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests in the previous Parliament. The whole House will want to join me in paying a warm tribute to his effort and to the painstaking work that he has put into that role in preparing these and other reports.

As the House understands and as I suggested in business questions last week, the background is in part the anxiety to make progress in setting up the departmental Select Committees for this Parliament. Apart from any other issue, it was sensible to give the House the chance to express its views on the report on the interests of select Committee Chairmen before that process went much further. It clearly is also right to set out consideration of the issues in that report in the wider context of the system for registering and declaring Members' interests as a whole, which is the subject of the other and rather larger report we are debating.

As the purpose of this debate—this comes directly to the point raised by the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden—is to allow for a general expression of views in the House before bringing forward any resolutions that may be appropriate, I hope that the House will feel it right for me to speak early and briefly so that we have the maximum opportunity for the expression of those views.

I make it clear that tonight I am essentially in a listening mode. Just as my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden did not think it right to go over every detail of the reports, although for slightly different reasons, I do not propose to attempt to give a firm view from the Dispatch Box on every proposal, which would pre-empt the purpose of the debate.

On the first report, it is right to say that, with regard to improving the system for registering Members' interests, anything that clarifies the working of the register and makes it easier for hon. Members to register their interests in a clear and consistent way is to be welcomed. The new form for registering Members' interests is the most obvious example of that, but I also see much merit in the proposal to invite hon. Members to say briefly what the firms in which they declare an interest are and what they do. Are they, for example, insurance brokers or building surveyors? That will be thought to be sensible by hon. Members of all parties and will be in keeping with the principles underlying the register.

As a minimum, the House will wish to see those proposals carried forward in the shape of resolutions. By saying that, I do not mean to suggest that there are not other aspects of the report—perhaps all of it—which would need to be carried forward in that way. However, I believe that it is right before deciding between the two main options—a resolution, recommended in the report, to implement the whole report and the possibility of a more complex series of resolutions reflecting doubts expessed by some hon. Members about specific recommendations—for us to have this debate. I make it clear—I hope that this will be some encouragement to the hon. Member for Bristol, South—that I have no doubt that the House will wish to see a resolution of one kind or the other.

**Ms. Primarolo:** Perhaps the Leader of the House can enlighten us. I do not understand why a debate that will have no conclusion has been allowed. Why did the Government not allow those who had reservations to table amendments to the substantive report in the normal way? We could then have had this debate and made some decision at the end of it. Instead, we shall be left with nothing at the end of the debate.

**Mr. Newton:** I understand the hon. Lady's point. Obviously a judgment has to be made case by case in such matters. It is neither unfamiliar in the House nor unreasonable—often it is the most sensible way to proceed—to test the water generally in such matters before coming forward with a set of detailed propositions. I thought that that was the most sensible way in which to proceed in this case.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Can the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will make some effort to implement the recommendations regarding the setting up of Select Committees, bearing in mind that one report has that specifically in mind? Departmental Select Committees are on the point of being established. Would it not be foolish to have a limited and narrow debate with no conclusion, when, next week or the week after, the Select Committees will be established? The rules, which the Select Committee spent a great deal of time in amending, should be brought into operation before that.

**Mr. Newton:** I was coming directly to referring generally to the second report on Select Committee Chairmen for which my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden made an eloquent case. It seems clear, both from some of the comments made subsequent to the report and from some of the comments made by those concerned with Select Committees in their evidence to the Select Committee on Members' Interests, that there is the possibility of rather greater controversy on some aspects of those proposals and perhaps an even stronger case for giving the House a general opportunity to express a view before deciding precisely how we should proceed.

I hope, incidentally, that all hon. Members would want to make it clear that, in expressing support for any of the specific proposals, no criticism is intended of Chairmen of Select Committees in the previous Parliament or in earlier Parliaments. I make three comments. First, I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden agrees that the objective of his Committee's proposal is not to remedy cases of clear abuse or cases that fall short of the standard to be expected, but rather to make an already impressive system of safeguards through the Register of Members' Interests even safer and even more clearly defensible against adverse public comment in the case of Select Committee Chairmen.

Secondly—I am glad to note the attendance in the House tonight of some of those whom I have in mind—it is right to think that the views of those who have been Chairmen of Select Committees will be of special interest to the House. I look forward to hearing their comments on the report.

Thirdly—I offer this as a tentative thought to the House—there is one question which the House may wish to consider, which was almost hinted at by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden in his use of the word "guidelines". We could end up with some extremely complicated resolutions which were difficult to draft and

*[Mr. Newton]*

which, even so, contained vague words such as "reasonable". In light of comments in the report and this debate, might it not therefore be better to consider proceeding by drawing up more formal guidelines—perhaps that could be done by the Liaison Committee—rather than going down the track of having resolutions? I raise that only as a point that should be considered. I do not suggest that I have already reached a conclusion or that others have done so. However, the thought necessarily occurs on reading the report.

I shall reply briefly to the hon. Member for Bradford, South by saying simply that as we move forward in the appointment of Select Committees for the new Parliament, as I hope that we shall, all those involved will undoubtedly wish to bear in mind both what was said in the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests and the views expressed in the House tonight.

8.58 pm

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): I begin in a sensible way by ingratiating myself with the audience, having noted that many members of the Select Committee are about. I can say unreservedly that the reports are important and contain some useful recommendations. I hope—from what I heard from the Leader of the House it seems that it is not a hope without expectation of realisation—that formal resolutions will soon be presented to the House so that the recommendations in the report can be implemented.

I should first like to make some comments by way of an overview. I find it pleasing that the ethos of the House seems to have changed since registration of Members' interests was first suggested. When the proposal was first made, it was controversial that registration should happen at all. There is now almost universal agreement compared with when the proposal was first made in 1974. At that time, there was a great deal of debate in central and local government about registration of interests.

I remember one local authority in Bromsgrove, of which I am particularly proud, introducing a voluntary register of interests in 1972, two years before the proposal was first made in the House. I might say that that is not recognised in the Select Committee's report. There was much controversy at that time, but now it is universally acknowledged that we need a register of interests.

It is acknowledged in both of the Select Committees' reports that the register needs to be clarified, to be tougher and to ensure that the integrity of the House and Members of Parliament has respect among the public. That must be of interest to all of us. I welcome the changes in the mood of the House since registration of interests was first debated.

I also welcome the fact that both of the reports repeatedly state that if Members are in doubt they should register. If any Member of Parliament has any doubt about whether to register, or if there is any ambiguity, the onus is on that Member to ensure that the interest is registered.

**Mr. Robert Adley** (Christchurch): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, more than anything else, the activities of the so-called parliamentary lobbying organisations have made many of us who at the beginning had doubts about the register realise that there is a need for transparency? Does he agree that we should not lose sight of that as the debate proceeds?

**Mr. Grocott:** That is an important point. Whatever the reasons for the change, I am glad that the mood of the House has changed and there is universal acceptance of registration.

I begin with the report on Chairmen and members of Select Committees. We can certainly accept unequivocally what the report says. It raises issues which some of us were perhaps surprised to see spelt out. It highlighted the wide variation in practice between Select Committees in what should be declared and what should not. It accepted the need to clarify and tighten the rules. It acknowledged that there was a clear difference between the responsibilities of Chairmen of Select Committees and those of members of Select Committees. That is an important acknowledgement. It was spelt out well by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) in his evidence to the Select Committee.

The report also stressed the need for resolutions of the House to implement the findings of the report. That ought to be fairly simple now. We have identified a problem, and the Select Committee has come up with the solution and made recommendations on how to implement it. All that remains is to find parliamentary time to make resolutions to implement the report and give it the status that it needs. I urge the Leader of the House rapidly to find a date when that can be done.

The report on Select Committee Chairmen is in a way the easier report. The other report has at its heart the provision of a new form for the registration of Members' interests. I welcome much of the report, but in two or three areas common sense seems to have failed to prevail. As I said, the heart of the report is the new registration form which, by and large, makes things clearer. It is a form which we can commend to the House. I expect that a resolution will be proposed rapidly so that we can have such a form.

I welcome the recommendation that Members should be more specific about the nature of the work that companies do. That seems to be a common-sense suggestion. Moving on to the declaration of interests, it is also highly desirable that early-day motions should be included among the matters in which Members' pecuniary interests need to be declared.

I shall use my remaining time to concentrate on three areas of the report where common sense has not prevailed as it might. First, the report does not acknowledge as it should the huge discrepancy—in the public eye and that of any reasonable observer—between the way in which local government and the House are treated.

I know all the arguments that are rehearsed about local councillors making executive decisions when we do not, but I profoundly dislike the almost patronising manner that the House—or some Members; I hope that many of us are exempt—adopts towards local councillors and what they do. Councillors' work is extremely important and they are rightly subject to stringent regulations. I have no objection to that. However, the public cannot understand why councillors should be strictly regulated when there is a more relaxed regime here.

The distinction between what is and what is not executive power is not easy to sustain. The Chairman of a Select Committee and its members have power and

influence in areas of our national life which put them in a special category—akin to a local authority committee. The Select Committee does not make executive decisions, but it has power, influence and access. Influence and access are power in the same way as making an executive decision is power.

Any member of the public would recognise that Members of Parliament have more potential to exercise their influence than local councillors. We should look more to local government as a model for the way in which interests are recognised and registered. We should be prepared to learn from councillors rather than lecturing them as we so often do.

Secondly, the part of the report dealing with the declaration of the sums of money involved requires examination. The key quote, which I do not think would commend itself to the man on the Clapham omnibus, or the current equivalent, is in paragraph 33. The former Speaker of the House is quoted as saying:

"it is the nature of the interest, not the actual sum of money, that is important."

It is not common sense to say that the interest is the significant factor rather than how much it is worth. For example, one could not say that someone who worked full-time on the railways had exactly the same interest in transport as someone who worked for a preservation society on a Saturday afternoon.

**Mr. Adley** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Grocott:** The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) seems to agree. Clearly, it is the degree of interest which is important, and that can be measured only in financial terms.

**Mr. Cryer:** My hon. Friend may wish to note page xxxv of the report on financial interests. When paragraph 33 was debated in Committee, I tabled an amendment proposing that the amount of money received by Members should be declared. That issue was raised in Committee, but unfortunately the amendment was defeated.

**Mr. Grocott:** I read the Committee proceedings with care and I saw my hon. Friend's amendment and also that tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

The Committee is arguing that an ice-cream salesman is the same as someone who runs a multiple food store. It does not make any difference, provided that they are both running something, what part of their total income is represented by income from their business. The Committee does not think that that is of interest to the House, and that is not common sense.

The third matter, to which I shall devote the strength of my feelings, is the Committee's apparent obsession with trade union sponsorship. I am not sponsored by a trade union, but if I were I should certainly be proud of it. No Labour Member is in the least bit embarrassed by, or has any difficulty whatsoever with, sponsorship by a trade union. We are proud of the support that we get from our trade unions. It is clear and distinct that there is no direct financial interest behind a donation to a constituency party by a trade union. It would be proper that that should not be a matter for declaration in the register. However, I am happy that it is and that it has been included, but clearly there must be a level playing field in such matters.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): There is another point. I was kicked out of the House because I said that Norman Tebbit was lining his pockets when he became a non-executive director of British Telecom. What about Peter Walker? He had been in the Cabinet but 18 months after he left it he received about 10 directorships. Moreover, would not it have been handy if we had had a register that said, "You must include the amount of money that you have received from companies or other bodies"? In that case, Peter Walker would have had to declare the several hundreds of thousands of pounds that he received from Maxwell for being the chairman of a company for a few short months, the Mercedes car and his £100,000 golden handshake. All that would have been in the register, and it is conceivable that he would have had to walk the plank with Maxwell had that been declared.

**Mr. Grocott:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. As I read the register of interests—I will be corrected by members of the Select Committee, who have been through all the detailed arguments, if I am wrong—if I as a member of the National Union of Journalists were to receive a regular contribution to my constituency party of £500 a year, which I do not, that would be declared in the register. If another hon. Member received a donation from, for example, a wealthy newspaper proprietor to the constituency party fund of, say, £100,000 in a single year, that would not be subject to the declaration of interests. That is absolutely ludicrous. It defies all common sense.

Although I was not party to all the discussions in the Committee, I suggest that we are talking not about the financial interests of Members of Parliament, but about the financing of political parties. I, for one, would be delighted if a Select Committee inquired into the financing of political parties. I would love to know the details about where the Conservative party receives all its money from. I know that it certainly has much more money to spend at a general election than any other party. The figures that I have seen for the 1987 general election show that the Conservative party spent about £9 million and the Labour party spent £4 million, while £1 million was spent by whatever the other lot were called at the time.

There is no doubt that the Conservatives have much more available money, so perhaps we should consider the financing of political parties. That is indirectly related to the interests of hon. Members. It is in all of our interests to get elected, and the way in which we are elected depends, in part at least, on the way in which our political parties are financed.

It is most peculiar that there is an obsession with the way in which financing in local constituencies takes place. There are strict rules over expenditure in individual constituencies and they have been in place since the 1880s, but there is no control or regulation over the national expenditure of political parties. However, we all know perfectly well that we are far more dependent for our position in this place on the national expenditure by political parties than we ever are on what is spent locally in individual constituencies.

It is perfectly legitimate for the Select Committee to consider, not the direct financial interests of hon. Members, but payment to constituency parties in order to make them function, but it should do it fairly and on the basis of a level playing field. If that consideration needs to be extended into an inquiry as to how political parties are

*[Mr. Grocott]*

financed so that we are a little more frank about how that takes place—something that I would welcome—let us do that as well.

To avoid sounding churlish and sour, I assure the House that I have no difficulty with the contents of the report, which I commend to hon. Members. I join my hon. Friends in urging the Leader of the House to accept that the issues involved are important and need to be acted on. There is agreement, at least at a minimal level, about how they should be acted on, and I urge the right hon. Gentleman to bring resolutions before the House as a matter of urgency.

9.15 pm

**Mr. Terrence L. Higgins** (Worthing): I welcome the debate and, for reasons that I shall explain, it is important that it is taking place before the Select Committees are re-established. In that connection, the Leader of the House will understand when I say that that is becoming a matter of the greatest urgency. I gather that many of the problems have been solved, but it would be totally wrong for the House to rise for the summer recess without the Committees having been established, so allowing them to organise their programmes, with the Government being held accountable.

I shall concentrate on the report concerned with Select Committees and their Chairmen, but I wish at the outset to make it clear that in my view it is important for Members to have outside interests, the corollary being that they are fully declared and understood by the House. I therefore welcome the other report and hope that its recommendations will be accepted.

The Select Committee was kind enough to invite me to give evidence as Chairman of the then Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Liaison Committee. The oral evidence that I and the other Chairmen gave was rather unstructured because the Committee seemed preoccupied with members of Select Committees having a contractual relationship with or doing business with a Department. That is a narrow point which is covered in paragraph 27, and I say no more about it.

I come to what I believe is the right approach for members and chairmen of Select Committees. In that context, it is crucial that members should declare their interests fully and that the Committee should be well aware of the position in that respect. But I agree with those who say that Chairmen of Select Committees are in a different position, so that stronger and more stringent rules should apply to them.

To a considerable extent, a Select Committee's Chairman determines the agenda of that Committee, he has a relationship, if not confrontational, in many respects close to the Department concerned, and he drafts the Chairman's report. That itself is an influential factor because, although it may be amended subsequently, it is rarely totally transformed. So Chairmen are in a special position. But it would be wrong for the House to insist that Chairmen should have no outside interests whatever. That would be to impose on them a penalty that is not imposed on any other Members of the House.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): The Select Committee did not say that.

**Mr. Higgins:** That is right, so I am supporting what the Committee said in that respect. It would, as I think the Committee recognised, deter some able Members from playing the role of Chairmen of Select Committees. It would also inevitably lead to the argument that Chairmen of Select Committees should be paid.

I have long taken the view that the moment I ceased to be the Chairman of a Select Committee, they would be paid. Should they be paid in the future, they must be paid above the level of Minister of State because the duties are very onerous indeed. I would not wish to see Chairmen of Select Committees paid, and I go along with the recommendations of the Select Committee on Members' Interests that they should not be precluded from having outside interests. On the other hand, it would be wrong for them to have interests which were clearly likely to cause conflicts with the business of the Committees of which they were Chairmen.

A problem is that some Select Committees are narrow while others are very broad. For instance, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Health should not be a director of a pharmaceutical company, but I see nothing wrong in his being a director of a heavy engineering company. Some Select Committees, such as the Treasury Select Committee, virtually preclude the Chairmen from having outside interests. Chairmen should not hold interests that are in conflict with their duties. By and large, the recommendations of the Select Committee on Members' Interests recognise that.

Although it is difficult, we must at this stage consider what is a relevant interest of a Select Committee Chairman. I firmly believe that the right group to judge that is the Select Committee concerned. If full disclosure is made, Select Committee members are in the best position to judge whether a candidate for Chairman has interests which should preclude him from becoming Chairman.

The Select Committee was kind to me in saying that it was particularly attracted by my suggestion that, before a Select Committee first meets, the Committee Clerk should circulate to members a list of interests of the various Committee members. When they first meet to decide who to select as Chairman, they would then know the various interests and could decide whether those should preclude a candidate from becoming Chairman. That is the right approach to adopt.

I doubt whether the proposed resolutions would make much difference. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House pointed out, they would inevitably involve words like "reasonable", and would not make much difference. I hope that we are on the eve of setting up the Select Committees, so it is important that the procedure that I suggested should proceed. The Committee should know in advance of its first meeting what members' interests are, and should then make the appropriate decision on the Chairman.

If that happens, it seems unnecessary to have the proposed resolutions. The House often proceeds more flexibly and effectively in dealing with such matters if we do not try to spell out matters in closely defined words, but rely on the approach that I suggested. My approach would require far more detailed scrutiny of the real problem than a tightly worded resolution, which would be ineffective or defeat the object of the exercise.

I hope that we can proceed in that way. If we do so, there should be no reason for criticism—there has been little criticism until now—of the position of Chairmen or members of Select Committees.

9.22 pm

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): This is a very short and unsatisfactory debate, and we have been unable to pick up extra time from the curtailment of earlier debates. The whole debate is limited to one and a half hours, whereas it would have been preferable to have a motion allowing us to finish speaking one and a half hours after 10 o'clock.

The House is extremely indulgent with Select Committee members. The new rules that we recommend on the proposed registration form were meant to make matters absolutely clear. Some hon. Members had difficulties in grappling with the complexity of the registration form, so the House decided that we should have another look at it to make it clear "beyond peradventure", as lawyers say. It allows simple-minded Members of Parliament to get the financial information down so that they are not confused. If it were then discovered that Members had financial interests that they had not declared, they could not make the excuse that they had been confused.

That contrasts starkly with the House's attitude towards people in receipt of unemployment benefit, income support and a range of benefits. We do not give an inch. If those people do not provide the information because of an oversight or for some other reason, we do not say that we will make a new set of forms to make it easier for them. Instead, they are generally prosecuted. That is not good enough, especially when the House often passes statutory instruments to enforce criminal penalties without adequate scrutiny, and often without a vote.

If there was any doubt in anyone's mind, the new rules are a bit clearer. They now require the declaration of information about Lloyd's syndicates. There was quite a discussion on that subject in Committee, a vote was taken and it is now a requirement. That change is important in view of the background to the affair over the past 12 months in which Lloyd's has been rocked by dissension and scandal. Hon. Members have said in the Chamber that Lloyd's insurance market and its chairman are either incompetent or corrupt or both. Those are not my views but I echo them—I happen to share them, but I have not pronounced them. That shows how important it is to have an adequate declaration of interests. The Committee rightly came to that conclusion.

Page 35, paragraph 33, of the Committee's proceedings shows that there was a debate and a vote on the issue of declaring the amount of money that a Member of Parliament receives. It is no good running away from the subject. I and people outside the House believe that the amount of money received by a Member of Parliament reflects the measure of influence received. If a Member of Parliament receives £25 from a mothers' union for expenses, no one will say that his or her vote was influenced by it. But if an hon. Member receives £25,000, people will look askance if that hon. Member's vote benefits the people giving him the money. Everyone recognises that, but no one will say that it is necessary for hon. Members to declare the amount of money that they receive.

There will be pressure from outside the House as soon as a scandal breaks. I and other Committee members—but not a majority—thought that we should not wait for a scandal outside the House to push us into taking action. Before I entered the House in 1974, most hon. Members thought that the system was perfectly adequate. When I was elected, I said that we should have a register of Members' financial interests. Labour Members said to me, "Don't worry, we know the wrong 'uns in here and how to deal with them." That did not last long as the pressure which resulted from the Poulson scandal shoved the House into producing a register to clarify the position, but it did not go far enough.

Following pressure over a period of time, it has become clear that the register should be improved, which could be done by Members declaring their financial interests. The salaries that we receive are enough for us to live adequately. We receive more than most of our constituents and should not need outside interests. People who take the contrary view say that the House would be a dull place if it were full of professional Members of Parliament and would not benefit from the richness of outside interests. That argument is never used to say that people should work outside in mental hospitals for poverty wages, clean out lavatories, work in engineering shops or down mines to enrich their work in the House. The jobs that people say would enrich the House are always those associated with large sums of money. That argument simply is not true. A vast number of people wish to enter the House. Plenty of them are prepared to work here for our basic salary of £30,000 a year plus office expenses. We should not have to depend on outside sources. People would respect this place far more if we did not do so.

The recommendations of the Committee do not meet all my requirements, but I am prepared to support them because they represent an improvement—they are a step in the right direction. I hope that there will be more public pressure to ensure that financial receipts are recorded. Things have come to a pretty pass when the following story can take place. A public relations representative came before the Select Committee on Members' Interests knowing that he had been paying thousands of pounds to Members of this House for introducing work to his company. The money was paid as a commission, but it was never declared and the matter came to light by chance. That individual told the Committee, supposedly the High Court of Parliament and duly appointed by this House to make a report, that he would not tell us how much money he had paid to Members. This is not good enough; the House must tackle the problem and agree to a Standing Order which requires Members to declare their financial interests.

The report on the Chairmen of Select Committees was embarked on as a result of a complaint by a Select Committee about an apparent conflict of interest. The press did not present those involved as having behaved decently, honourably or nobly. The press reports said that the Chairman of a Select Committee was involved in a conflict of interest that he had failed to declare. That Committee took up the matter and wrote to the Select Committee on Members' Interests asking for an investigation. Pressure from outside was brought to bear as well.

*[Mr. Bob Cryer]*

Our Committee recommends that resolutions be laid by the Leader of the House obliging a Member elected to be Chairman of a departmentally-related Committee or of the Public Accounts Committee to ensure

"that he or she owns no financial interest in conflict with his or her duty to the committee and to the House. We further recommend that Standing Order No. 128 be amended to enable your Committee to consider any complaint based on non-compliance with that resolution."

This sort of work is not very attractive but someone has to do it. It is downright distasteful to deal with complaints of this nature, but we had to look into the complaint by the Defence Select Committee. The Leader of the House should let us know whether he intends to table the necessary amendments to change Standing Orders.

We further said:

"We consider it . . . advisable, in the public interest, for the Chairmen of departmentally-related select committees and any chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to divest themselves of any direct personal pecuniary interest or benefit which might reasonably be thought to influence their judgment; or from which the Chairman might reasonably be thought to benefit directly from his or her position as Chairman. And we recommend that the House should place this requirement upon the Chairman of these committees by a further resolution."

An hour and a half is not long. These resolutions should be included on the Order Paper before the summer recess so as to ensure that we can vote on them and put them into action immediately, thereby avoiding future conflicts of interest in our Select Committees of the sort that arose in the story that I have outlined.

9.34 pm

**Mr. Robert Adley** (Christchurch): First, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—I hope that I can do so on behalf of all hon. Members—for his unfailing courtesy, patience and tolerance with all of us who participated from time to time in the Committee's deliberations. He did not have an easy job, but he always bent over backwards, if any of us were late, to ensure that we were not left behind because we had missed the Committee's earlier discussions.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) talked about obsessions, and referred to the Committee's obsession with trade union matters. I do not propose to discuss that. I think that one of the obsessions of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) is that this place is full of corrupt or neo-corrupt individuals. I do not believe that that is true. I do not believe either that that opinion is held by more than a tiny number of people outside the House. The press has done a great deal to generate interest in some activities and I think that it was my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) who made the point that during his weekend surgeries in his constituency he is not constantly invaded by people coming to complain about the corrupt activities of hon. Members.

**Mr. Cryer:** I shall intervene only briefly because the hon. Gentleman referred to me. I did not make such a comment nor imply that. I say only that I think that people outside the House are entitled to make a judgment. I think also that the declaration would raise the standing of this place, not diminish it.

**Mr. Adley:** I shall not argue with the hon. Gentleman, who has made his point.

I wish to take up two matters with which the Committee tried to deal during its deliberations. I categorise the first as transparency and the second as the perversion of the House. It is important that we should do everything that we can to ensure that there is transparency, so that there is every opportunity for people inside the House and outside to know to whom they are talking and from whom they are receiving telephone calls and correspondence.

No mention has been made this evening of the register of the interests of Members' secretaries and of their research assistants, which I use as an example. It is a fascinating document. Virtually all the major public relations and parliamentary consultancy companies in the country have someone in the House working for a Member. I suggest that those of my colleagues who have not read the register would be well advised to do so.

As you well know, Madam Speaker, the House is a funny place. We pass laws and tell everyone in the country to improve his or her methods of trading and methods of business and, indeed, to improve everything that he or she does, but the amount of training, assistance, advice and guidance that is given to new Members when they enter the House is virtually nil, particularly on the subjects that we are now discussing.

During the 22 years that I have been in the House, the activities of lobbying companies have transformed its affairs in many ways. It would have been unnecessary and, I think, unthinkable 22 years ago to have to refer to the pressures that Members might face from commercial and professional lobbying organisations outwith the House. That is no longer the position. I think that one of our recommendations in due course will be that new Members should be made aware of the pressures that they might face from lobbying organisations and, for example, from polling organisations. Long ago, I stopped taking telephone calls from polling organisations, but they are being made all the time. I am sure that new Members will be asked whether they can spare half an hour or an hour for one of these organisations, which will charge their clients huge fees based on the time that they have extracted, as it were, from hon. Members. It is right that people should know about these things. New Members should be made aware of the pressures that will be brought to bear on them, which they now accept whereas we never did.

I shall refer briefly to some of the comments that are contained in the report. I shall not quote at length because time is short but merely quote one or two paragraphs. First, I turn to paragraph 58, which is headed:

"Visits and benefits for Members' staff".

How many of us in the Chamber know how many times our secretaries and research assistants are contacted by commercial lobbying organisations? The paragraph refers to visits and benefits for our staff, but do any of us really know what pressures some of those who work long and hard for us are under from some of the professional lobbying organisations? It might be worth while for new Members especially to ask their secretaries or research assistants what approaches they have received from some of those organisations.

I do not always agree with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), but he has some original ideas on

the subject. He gave ample evidence to the Committee. I refer hon. Members to two sentences that appear on page 28. They are as follows:

"The whole business world that has grown up around influencing Members of Parliament is staggering. I throw away 95 per cent. by weight of my mail every day, all of which is paid for by the Chancellor of the Exchequer because it is a legitimate business expense to send annual reports to hon. Members. The Palace of Westminster is crowded with lobbyists."

Many of us know that that is true.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), giving evidence to the Committee which appears at page 52, refers to his mailbag. He said:

"I am very aware from my own mailbag and the high and growing proportion of the letters and communications I receive which are generated quite obviously from lobby groups of one kind or another."

Many of them are entirely legitimate, but they are part of the pressure that is applied to Members about which we should know more.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) —I am not sure whether he is still chairman of the parliamentary Labour party—referred at page 63 to the grey area of

"PR companies where you do not know who they are actually representing."

There is a clear area for a lead for more transparency.

I commend to those of my colleagues who have not read it the final paragraph on page 83 of Professor Norton's memorandum as an example of the pressures that we are up against.

We have done our best to provide the House with a little guidance. I do not know whether we have done a perfect job, but I echo the views expressed already to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. We hope that in due course he will come forward with some proposals which result in the House being able to take action.

9.40 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): I spent nine years as a member of the Select Committee and I have spent the past six years angling for the inquiry that has now taken place into registration and declaration.

I have always believed that the rules were deficient. I do not believe that the House is full of corrupt people, but I do believe that there are people in the House who abuse the House. They abuse our procedures and they have to be restrained.

I want to start by referring to a resolution carried on 22 June 1858. It might be for the House to reflect on whether we fulfil the terms of that resoluton some 140 years later. That resolution says:

"That it is contrary to the usage and derogatory to the dignity of this House that any of its Members should bring forward, promote or advocate in this House, any proceedings or measure in which he may have acted or been concerned for or in consideration of any pecuniary fee or reward."

That resolution has been breached on perhaps thousands of occasions during the past century—most recently over Lloyd's, where we know that Members have made statements in the House of Commons when they knew that a pecuniary fee or reward was a consideration arising from their interventions.

We raised a number of issues in the report which, in the main, deals with the problems that concern me, but there are one or two areas where we have not satisfactorily dealt with the problems. One of them is on the question of spouses' interests. In Committee, when discussing spouses' interests, we used to refer to what I called the Shirley Porter amendment. That referred to the unlikely scenario where I, the Member of Parliament for Workington, was married to Lady Porter. The question that I put repeatedly to the Committee was whether her shareholdings in Tesco might reasonably be thought by others to influence my actions, speeches or votes in Parliament, or actions taken in my capacity as a Member of Parliament. My view is that, in the unlikely event of my being married to Lady Porter, those shareholdings would be an influence on my judgments, and that I would have to declare them. The moment one goes down that route, spouse interest must be taken into account by the House of Commons—insofar as in many circumstances, due to the very nature of marriage, they are inseparable from the interest of the Member of Parliament concerned.

Gifts and hospitality are another aspect that cause me concern. The offer of visits abroad, tickets and hospitality abroad by outside organisations is widespread. I know to my certain knowledge of innumerable examples in this place where tickets and hospitality have neither been registered nor declared. If we are honest with ourselves, we all know that to be true. I hope that the way in which the form has been rephrased will catch people out who previously thought that they should not reveal to Parliament or to the public that their visits abroad—often for the most legitimate reasons—were paid for by outside organisations.

My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) referred to sponsorship, which historically has been a debate about trade unions. Following the 1974 resolution of the House, Hastings agreements on trade union sponsorship were always registered and declared. I have argued repeatedly in the Committee that other forms of sponsorship exist. I refer to sponsorship by companies, where the benefit is equally indirect—being conferred not on the Member of Parliament but on his constituency party or association; professional bodies; partnerships; and industrial organisations, to which I shall refer later.

My hon. Friend referred to the need for a level playing field, but I believe that one does not exist in the application of the rules—and has not done so since 1974, with the exception of two Conservative Members who registered sponsorship of their Conservative associations by companies.

I draw the attention of the House to examples of company sponsorship. Stanley Kalms of Dixons paid £100,000 to local Conservative associations and to Conservative Central Office. None of that money was ever declared or registered by Conservative Members in the register, on the Floor of the House, or in Committee. Meanwhile, Labour Members are declaring and registering trade union sponsorship to the value of £600.

**Mr. Adley:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I would like to do so, but the time is 9.48 pm, and there are only 15 minutes left for this debate.

Tony Clegg, a business man, paid £20,000 to local and national Conservataive associations; and the constituency association of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) received a lump sum of

*[Mr. Campbell-Savours]*

£10,000 from Wallace Mercer, a property developer in Scotland whose company is named Dunedin Properties. I believe that he is also a director of the Hearts football club.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, West is an honourable man, and I do not question his integrity; but does he think it fair that a trade union-sponsored Member of Parliament receiving £600 a year for his constituency association should have to register and declare that money, while the hon. Gentleman's constituency association is not required to do so, although the implications in terms of influence are exactly the same?

In 1989, and again in 1990, the Boddington group of companies, which specialises in health care, paid £5,000 to Conservative associations. I submit that the payment of those moneys is indistinguishable from the payment of moneys by trade unions to constituency parties; both benefit the hon. Members concerned.

The Vaux group paid £12,000 to, I believe, an industrial council, which then passed it on to Conservative constituency associations. During one inquiry, I produced the accounts of a company called Hall and Woodhouse Brewers, which contributed to Conservative associations in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989. The people who worked in the plant were members of the Transport and General Workers Union. Hon. Members sponsored by that union were declaring and registering the £600 per annum that was paid to their constituency parties, while the constituency associations that received moneys in those four years were not required to declare the receipt of the moneys through the hon. Members concerned, or to register it in the House of Commons.

British United Industrialists also pays money to constituency associations. In a single year—1989—16 companies paid £186,000 to local Conservative associations, and industrial councils paid £169,000 to such associations. That money came from 14 companies.

I am merely arguing for a level playing field. If moneys are going from companies, at local level, directly to constituency associations—exerting exactly the same influence as trade union sponsorship on the operation of those associations—why should hon. Members who receive £600 a year from unions have to register it?

I am sorry if I have been provocative. As members of the Committee know, I have supported many proposals and amendments from Conservative Members, but I believe that we have not dealt with some issues properly. Let me quote from some documents from Conservative Central Office. A note from the North West Industrial Council reads as follows:

"I know that some to whom I am writing have said that they are unable to send company donations for one reason or another. In such cases, it would be very much appreciated if your Directors who are Conservative supporters would kindly send a joint or individual personal contribution. When considering this request, I am sure the significant reductions in personal taxation by the Conservative administration—and the well-publicised intentions of Labour to increase top marginal rates"—

that is all nonsense, by the way—

"will be borne in mind."

Another document explains

"how to make your donation".

We are not talking about tenners and fivers. The document states:

"Please tick the appropriate box below and fill in details of your name and address".

Donations of £200, £250, £500 or £1,000 are requested from business men for Conservative associations—sums far in excess of the money paid to the majority of Labour constituencies under the Hastings agreement. We know that such contributions are often made.

I have a document from the Conservative and Unionist party treasurer's department. It says:

"We are always grateful for any amount received, but in view of the high cost of running the Party Organisation these days, we hope that as many corporate donations as possible will be in the four figure bracket or at least in the hundreds from smaller concerns . . . Cheques should kindly be made in favour of either the 'North West Industrial Council' or"

to the Conservative party. I do not object to the principle of registration or declaration, so long as there is an equal obligation on Conservative Members to register and declare. Tens of thousands of businesses and business men pay sums to Conservative associations far in excess of the £600 that constituency parties receive annually under the Hastings agreement.

I refer Conservative Members to what the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) admitted during a "World in Action" interview. I have the transcript. On the question of influence, he said:

"One representative of a brewer made it clear to me in oblique terms that if I didn't back the brewers in what they were saying, then of course, perhaps, some money might be withdrawn from the Conservative Party".

In other words, he was saying that pressure can be brought to bear, yet Conservative Members persist in arguing that the register is necessary because of unions' ability to influence Labour Members. There is an admission of influence, made by a Conservative Member on a national programme.

Finally, I draw an analogy between an industrial council and an industrial union. If an industrial union sponsors a constituency party, it pays £600 a year which is used to run the constituency party.

**Dame Peggy Fenner** (Medway): It sponsors a Member.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** But the money goes to the constituency party; the Member sees none of it.

That industrial union is, in effect, a combine—a combination of members who have an objective: to pay moneys to a constituency Labour party. That is what they believe in. An industrial council is a combine. It has members just like trade unions and they collectively put their funds together and pay them in one sum to a constituency association because, again, they want to give their money to the Conservative party. What is the difference? I am able to identify the difference. An industrial council combine does not have to register or declare, but an industrial union combine must do so. Yet they can pay exactly the same sum of money annually.

I believe that that is unreasonable. The great majority of people in this country will agree with me. If it were possible to televise our proceedings tonight, the noise that has come from the Conservative Benches during my speech would show the public who is right. I am right, and they know that I am right. They know that there is an inconsistency and that we are right to argue for a level playing field.

9.58 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): The debate is about influence. We have just heard a speech which underlines the fact that if money is given to a Labour hon. Member,

influence is bought whereas if money is given to a Conservative party association, there is no influence bought because there are no votes bought in the Conservative party by any contribution.

The question of influence is important and relates to what has been said by my former colleagues on the Select Committee about declaring amounts. Certainly when I was a member of that Committee, there was an interesting debate, which I am sure has continued since, about the extent to which the money received by an individual hon. Member could influence him. Perhaps inadvertently, but fairly, members of Labour's Front Bench made the point that the extent to which a donation may influence an hon. Members's actions depends on his or her financial standing. There might have been a case for suggesting that a declaration should be made if the money received was above a certain proportion of total income, but that case was not made in Committee and has not been made tonight, so it is a matter for another day.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on his chairing of the Committee and on the recommendations made to the House, and I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on his reception of them. I look forward to steady progress on these issues and on the recommendations made by the Select Committee of which I was a member. They will enhance the standing of the House and reassure the members of the public who are watching the debate that the overwhelming majority of Members are honourable Members and that they try to look after their constituents' interests and put aside any other pressures that may be placed on them by outside bodies. In that spirit, we should welcome the report and the results that will flow from it.

10 pm

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): The debate certainly shows the weakness of the Select Committee system because, once again, sloppy consensus is at work. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that he and other Labour Members of Parliament tried to move some resolutions, but they were flattened. They wanted to ensure that the money received by hon. Members who had directorships and who made money in the law courts was mentioned in the register, but they got done. Sloppy consensus prevailed.

We are not talking about the real issues because the fact that some hon. Members get directorships means that they are away from the House. Under the previous Government, 200 or so Tory Members of Parliament had directorships, consultancies and God knows what else, which is why we meet here at half-past two in the afternoon. They had 500 or so directorships between them, and there is a pairing system in the House so that Tory hon. Members can make money outside——

*It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings thereon, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to Order [19 June].*

**Madam Speaker:** With the leave of the House, I shall put the remaining motions together.

## ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Patrick Cormack, Mr. Simon Hughes, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. David Lightbown, Mr. George Mudie, Mr. Ray Powell and Sir Donald Thompson be members of the Accommodation and Works Committee.

## ADMINISTRATION

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. Sydney Chapman, Mr. David Madel, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mrs. Marion Roe and Mr. William Ross be members of the Administration Committee.

## CATERING

*Ordered,*

That Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. Anthony Steen and Mr. John Townend be members of the Catering Committee.

## INFORMATION

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Spencer Batiste, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Harold Elletson, Mr. Andrew Hargreaves, Mr. John McFall, Mr. Andrew Miller and Mr. Gary Waller be members of the Information Committee—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

## Heathrow

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.3 pm

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I wish to bring to the attention of the House a matter which may not be as interesting as the item which we were just discussing but which is important to me and my constituents. It relates to the future development of Heathrow airport.

In case anyone does not know or is interested to know, I shall give some facts about the world's busiest international airport. It employs 50,000 people directly and about 20,000 indirectly. It handles more than 50 million passengers each year and about 380,000 aircraft movements a year. It uses two runways, running from east to west. That compares with Gatwick, with one runway, and Stansted, with one runway. Heathrow has four terminals to go with the two runways. Two runways for one terminal is the usual basis.

Some 72 per cent. of Heathrow lies within my constituency, including terminals 1, 2 and 3, and part of terminal 4. All of the proposed terminal 5 will lie within my constituency. With the recommendations from the local government boundary commission still to be enacted, I anticipate having the whole of Heathrow in my constituency, perhaps by the end of the year.

Increasing demand has led to expansion and there has been an increased contribution to the national and local economy from Heathrow. Expansion has led also to increases in noise, pollution, traffic congestion and environmental damage. There must be a balance between the development of Heathrow airport and the lives and livelihood of my constituents.

The development of the terminals came about primarily because demand in the 1970s led to proposals for terminal 4. That terminal came into being in the mid-1980s. At the public inquiry, there were suggestions that when terminal 4 came on line, Heathrow would be at maximum capacity. During the inquiry, it was said clearly in several quarters that there would be no need for a fifth terminal. Indeed, during the passage of the Airports Act 1986—I was a member of the Standing Committee, which sat for more than 100 hours, throughout its deliberations—the information coming to us from the British Airports Authority was that it wanted Stansted to be expanded. BAA believed that the future development of airports and airport capacity in the south-east would lie primarily at Stansted. At that time, BAA was not readily interested in the development of Heathrow and certainly was not interested in a fifth terminal.

Interestingly, when the Bill became law, one of the first things that BAA did, within days of the enactment, was to advocate the coming on to line of a fifth terminal. The application for terminal 5 went against the views of the inquiry and against the case made for the development of Stansted. We should also bear in mind that Stansted now handles about 1·8 million passengers and that it can take many millions more before it is anywhere near maximum capacity. It has one runway at present.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether my constituents can now believe any of the information they are getting about the development of terminal 5 and about the implications that flow from it. Several questions need answering. Should there be improvement in the infrastructure and surface access to Heathrow before terminal 5 is developed? Should there be a complete ban on night flights? Should restrictions be placed on the type of aircraft allowed into Heathrow because of noise? Should aircraft movements be restricted by reducing some domestic flights? Should a third runway at Heathrow be ruled out for all time?

The response that my constituents want to hear—I support them in that wish—is as follows. There needs to be a vast improvement in the infrastructure and surface access to the four terminals already in place at the airport. Traffic congestion in and around the airport is not good at the best of times and can be almost unbearable at peak hours. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to what occurred on a Friday afternoon just a few weeks ago. Because of a burst of sunshine, the motorway began to break up between junctions 3 and 4 in my constituency—junction 4, of course, leads directly into the terminal—and there was chaos right back to Cromwell road because of that. I am convinced that many people missed their flight or that flights were delayed to ensure that passengers could get to the airport in time. The surface access available now and the infrastructure do not provide an adequate means by which to get to the airport with just four terminals. God help us if there is a fifth terminal without a massive increase in infrastructure and surface access.

There must be a ban on all night flights and on the use of engine test-beds at night at the airport. The number of night flights is small—between 5,500 and 6,000—in relation to the total number of flights, which is 380,000 a year in and out of Heathrow. However, they cause a great deal of disturbance and a ban would be welcomed by most people living nearby. I am told by British Airways that it needs the night flights because aeroplanes may get a following wind and arrive early. I know of no aeroplane which does not have brakes of some kind to slow it down. So it is beyond me to understand why they have to fly in at 5 am.

I am told by the same people that night flights are necessary because of time changes. I know of no airline that is aware of time changes and cannot fly in at normal times. The airlines' argument is really that they must have night flights to cope with their arrangements with other international airlines. But if one aircraft came in from the far east—say, Japan—and was re-directed because it came in too early, an airline would soon learn its lesson and realise that flights could not come in early. It would be aware of the implications of coming in early if we took that position.

There should also be restrictions on the type of aircraft that fly into Heathrow. Only modern aircraft with much reduced noise levels should be allowed to fly into the airport. Airlines should be made aware of their responsibilities on noise. They should not expect concessions to be made, whatever the technical and financial reasons. It is no good airlines saying, "We are doing our best to have quieter aeroplanes. They are just around the corner." That does not help the person who is kept awake by noisy aeroplanes tonight, tomorrow night and the night after that. Airlines have to learn that if they want access to the world's busiest international airport, they must take some action on noise levels. They are making some progress on noise, but I do not believe that it is enough.

There is an even stronger case for restricting aircraft movements at Heathrow. General aviation should be

banned altogether and some domestic services should be severely cut. We should reduce the approximately 90,000 domestic flights by at least half. I see no justification—I am sure that colleagues will disagree—for flights carrying only 18 people flying from Plymouth to the world's busiest international airport. Often an aeroplane carries only 18 people. I am told that there are interlining implications. Only 1·8 persons on average are likely to take another aeroplane at Heathrow to fly elsewhere.

Nor do I see the justification for flights from East Midlands airport to Heathrow. It is almost quicker to go by road. Although airports such as Leeds-Bradford are important locally, why should passengers believe that they have a God-given right to fly into the world's busiest international airport from there? Not only is it nonsense, but it affects the movement of aircraft. Such flights take not a slot but a slot and a bit when they come into Heathrow because of the vortex. Fewer aircraft move because of the nonsense of smaller aeroplanes coming into that airport.

Of course, I accept that we must have domestic flights from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester and Newcastle to Heathrow, but there must be a limit to the number of domestic flights that we allow to come into Heathrow. If we controlled those flights, 40,000 to 45,000 more movements would be available for larger international aircraft; or, if we did not want to increase the number of international flights, we could reduce the number of movements by that figure.

I am told that it is not fair to reduce the number of domestic flights to Heathrow and that a reduction would affect local economies. I simply do not believe it. We must take tough action if we are to ensure that Heathrow maintains its international position.

The point which I want to make more forcefully than all the others together is that the Government should state now loudly and clearly, for the benefit of my constituents who have been used and abused and tossed aside by the Labour party, that there will be no third runway. The Labour party worked up that fear in people's minds. I condemn my local Labour party and the local Labour candidate. They had people in fear ringing me up saying, "Mr. Dicks, if you win the election, the villages of Harlington and Sipson will be knocked down. I shall be homeless next week because your Government will have a Cabinet meeting to agree on a third runway". That campaign was pursued throughout the election. It was an appalling way to behave.

It is not true that there is to be a third runway. But I should like the Government to say clearly that there is no possibility whatever of a third runway at Heathrow today, tomorrow or at any time in the future. They must say that clearly because that is the only way in which we can kill the nasty rumour which is upsetting and affecting many of my constituents.

Those who seek more aircraft movements, more night flights, additional runway capacity and a fifth terminal at Heathrow must realise that Heathrow exists within the wider local community. My constituents' interests need to be protected when the expansion of Heathrow is considered. I look to the Government to support me in protecting those interests. I am aware of the Government's responsibility for the wider implications for the national economy and the economics of aviation. They must be aware also that people living in and around Heathrow are worried about the continual expansion of the airport. They question the limit of the expansion. They ask what will happen next and about the blight to their properties.

BAA and the major airlines consider aviation first, last and always, but they must take off their blinkers and get away from their tunnel vision. If they want the international airport to continue to operate, they must consider how to go about it and bear in mind the impact on local residents. They must also bear in mind that it is nonsense that there can be no second runway at Gatwick because of a planning guarantee given years ago. That is stupid. Gatwick is the second largest international airport and it has one runway.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) shook his head earlier in my speech. Stansted has one runway, which is vastly underused. One can walk into that airport and see three men and a dog waiting for an aeroplane—the rest is just empty space. We must encourage people to think about using Stansted rather than Heathrow. I am the last person in the world to support direction. I am happy to let the market decide, but one must not skew the market to encourage more people to go to Heathrow. The idea of a fifth terminal at Heathrow without the conditions which I have laid down is nonsense. The idea of a third runway is nonsense and will skew the market to encourage more people to fly from Heathrow and stop them from having to go to Stansted. Stansted airport has good infrastructure and an adequate rail service. Gatwick also has a good rail service and could be developed with a second runway.

I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the fact that Heathrow is almost at its peak. Expansion must be considered in the context of the national economy and of local constituents. Please, will my hon. Friend consider two of the five conditions which I laid down which are of overriding importance? First, will he consider imposing a complete ban on night flights? The number is so small that it does not matter to the airlines and the airport. Secondly, will he tell us now, if possible, that there will be no third runway at Heathrow in the foreseeable future? I appreciate that he cannot say, "Never".

10.17 pm

**The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on securing this debate on an important subject. We came to the House on the same day in 1983 and he has managed to stay here ever since. I rested for a while—as we actors say. It is a great pleasure to rejoin him again.

My hon. Friend is well known for the way that he has constantly fought to protect the interests of his constituents around Heathrow. He has expressed admirable concern for the affairs of Heathrow and various aspects of it that impact on the lives of his constituents.

I also note that my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) is in his place. He also has a constituency interest, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who has been a frequent contributor to debates on this subject.

**Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham):** While thanking my hon. Friend for what he has said, I emphasise that aircraft noise is a curse and a pestilence which ruins people's quiet enjoyment of their homes and gardens. The number of flights every day from Heathrow is now more than 1,000

*[Mr. Toby Jessel]*

—one every couple of minutes—and hundreds of thousands of people living around Heathrow do not want the noise to be contained; they want a substantial and permanent reduction in it. They do not want a fifth terminal. We stopped it in 1985 and we mean to stop it again.

**Mr. Norris:** I shall touch on that matter. I am still pleased to see my hon. Friend here this evening, and I am glad that he was able to make his inimitable contribution to our proceedings.

I am also pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope) here. He is not merely the Whip on duty but is well known as one of the few Members who can officially say that he has a night flying rating. Perhaps he joined us for that reason, but none the less he is most welcome. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansdyke (Mr. Aspinwall), whose interest in aviation matters is well known, is also present. I also appreciate the support of my hon. Friends the Members for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), whose keen interest in matters avionic is also extremely well known. The extraordinarily packed House that attends the debate is evidence of the fact that the subject of it is serious and that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington has raised some serious points.

Perhaps I may supply some of the background to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington is right—Heathrow represents a vital national and local asset. It is Europe's busiest airport, the world's busiest international airport and a major employer locally. It is a key gateway into this country for passengers and air cargo alike and many of my hon. Friend's constituents, as he knows, will be numbered among the 50,000 people who work at Heathrow, either for the airport company itself or for one of the many other businesses there. Of course, many other jobs are generated by Heathrow indirectly.

The subject is important, too, because of the impact that Heathrow has on the lives of those living and working within its orbit. There is no denying that major airports are generally awkward neighbours. It is right that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members with constituency interests should bring to BAA, to Ministers and to the House the concerns of their constituents and that we should address them properly.

My hon. Friend has referred to the announcement by BAA last month that it was opening consultations with local authorities with a view to bringing forward a planning application for a fifth terminal at Heathrow towards the end of the year. The forecasts suggest that the demand for air travel will continue to grow, and that by the end of the decade perhaps twice as many passengers will want to travel through the London airports as do so today. Against that background, it is clearly right that the aviation industry should address itself to how that demand from consumers might be met.

I naturally welcome the fact that, before seeking to finalise its planning application, BAA is to carry out extensive consultation with local authorities on the option that it sees as the most appropriate to pursue. I know that the airport is also going to considerable lengths to make those living nearby aware of its proposal, through leaflets and a telephone information line. All hon. Members will welcome that because it is vitally important that constituents understand what is being proposed, and that their concerns and comments are not formed on the basis of half truths and half remembered statements and facts.

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): Is it not true that a lot of people living around airports, particularly Heathrow, work at them and that they are fully aware that if that airport reduced its capacity, they might well be out of a job?

**Mr. Norris:** The importance of Heathrow to the local community cannot be over-emphasised. My hon. Friend is right to point out that many people who will be affected by the airport's activities as residents are also employed by it. That is a simple matter of fact.

**Mr. Jessel:** Not all of them work at the airport.

**Mr. Norris:** As my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham says, many of them are not employed in the airport. As ever, he is right.

I wish to consider how BAA is approaching the application. It is entirely right that it should seek to ensure that information is available to those who are concerned about the development of the airport so that they discuss the issue on the basis of the facts and not on suppositions. Let us be in no doubt, the fifth terminal is a significant development. BAA is right to keep its neighbours in touch with its thinking.

I stress that, if and when a planning application is submitted, there is the possibility of it coming for ultimate decision to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, acting in concert with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. For that reason, my hon. Friend, who is an experienced Member, will appreciate that I am constrained in what I might say tonight about such a project and he will understand the position that I and my right hon. Friend are in. But I can say that there is no pre-judgment of the matter on the part of the Government. Any application for a fifth terminal, in whatever form it is proposed, will need to be considered on the merits of that specific proposal, and everyone with views will have the opportunity to put them forward.

My hon. Friend referred to the implications of a fifth terminal for night noise at Heathrow, and the general question of noise was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham in his intervention. BAA explained, in the material accompanying its announcement, that its proposal would not require any increase in night flights. But my hon. Friend wants to go further than that: he wants to see any further terminal development made conditional on a complete ban on movements at night.

Because one might reasonably expect aircraft noise to be a subject addressed in the context of a planning application for terminal 5, and because, as I say, my right hon. Friend will, in effect, be acting in a quasi judicial capacity in due course when he comes to consider the application, I will not comment tonight on my hon. Friend's proposal. But I tell him and the House, in the context of aircraft noise, which I recognise is a particular concern to many of those living around busy airports, that, happily, modern jet aircraft are considerably quieter than their predecessors. Their development has brought substantial benefits. As my hon. Friend knows, the figures are striking. Between 1978 and 1989, there was a reduction

of almost 70 per cent. in the number of people exposed to aircraft noise around Heathrow, despite the increase in activity. Arrangements which have now been agreed to phase out so-called "Chapter Two" aircraft will bring further benefits.

As ever in such matters, one must strike a balance between the interests of those wishing to fly and of those living and working around airports. As my hon. Friend implied, that balance is not necessarily easy to find. It should not be assumed, for example, that night movements are simply movements that cannot be squeezed into the daytime. He was right on some points, but a night departure or arrival may be dictated by where the aircraft is flying to or from, and other night movements will be carrying time-sensitive goods such as newspapers, mail and perishable items.

Responsibility for the regulation of noise at Heathrow, as at other BAA London airports, rests with the Government, and we have sought to strike a reasonable balance in the night noise restrictions now in place at the airport. Hon. Members will know that that regime is due for review in the autumn of this year, and we shall be consulting widely in framing the new arrangements.

My hon. Friend also spoke of a fifth Heathrow terminal in relation to a possible third runway. I am grateful for this opportunity to comment on that because I know that there is a lot of misunderstanding about the relationship between the two propositions. There need not be such misunderstanding because, in the material that it has made available about its proposal, BAA has emphasised that the terminal would not require a third runway. Indeed, the notion of a fifth terminal at Heathrow has been a matter for debate for many years, not least in the House, without any suggestion attaching to it that it implied the need for further runway capacity.

I believe that the confusion has arisen because a third Heathrow runway was one of 10 options for meeting long-term demand identified by the Civil Aviation Authority as looking feasible in air traffic control terms when the authority advised the Government in 1990 on our future runway capacity needs. As such, it is one of the notional developments being addressed by the working group, chaired by my Department, which is taking forward and broadening the CAA's advice. That group, which has a working assumption that existing runway capacity will need to have been substantially exhausted before new capacity is justified, is looking well ahead. It is not concerned with airport development to serve existing runways.

The working group will offer advice in due course on the implications of providing additional runway capacity at the various locations. There are those who argue that the benefits of additional capacity, to users and to United Kingdom industry generally, would be greatest if it were provided at Heathrow. My hon. Friend is doubtless aware of those arguments. But the Government are conscious, too, of the strength of view in some quarters that a third Heathrow runway should not be built, for reasons of environmental impact, pressure on infrastructure, or aircraft noise.

Clearly all the factors have to be assessed. I think that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members will accept that the Government cannot simply ignore the advice that they have from the CAA on future need, nor the identification by the authority of a number of possible locations for additional capacity. It is right that the implications of developing capacity at each of those various locations should be looked at, dispassionately and without commitment, so that a properly informed view can be taken.

Heathrow local interests are involved in the work of the group, both directly through the representation of the local authorities via SERPLAN, through the Heathrow airport consultative committee, and through the Federation of Heathrow Anti-Noise Groups; and indirectly, through a parallel written consultation that has taken place. Once the working group has published its views, there will be a further period of consultation on its report. And it is worth emphasising that the working group is not a substitute for the normal planning processes. Before there could be any major runway development, at whatever site, a specific proposal would need to be worked out, with an opportunity for those with views to bring them forward.

I hope that my hon. Friend will understand that, in the context of what I can say tonight, I cannot give him an absolute assurance about the linkage between the announcement of an application in respect of a fifth terminal by BAA and the elimination of the third runway option simply because there is no linkage between the two.

**Mr. Dicks:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Norris:** I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but it is 10.31 pm and I have only a minute in which to finish my reply.

Clearly no demand for a third runway is implicit in the application for the fifth terminal. I know that that will reassure my hon. Friend and his constituents.

This has been a useful debate, on an important subject, and one to which I am sure the House will return. Heathrow is a great British success story and a national asset, but of course a development of that size brings its difficulties, and these need to be addressed and solutions found. I hope what I have said this evening gives my hon. Friend confidence that, if and when BAA formally seeks permission to build a fifth terminal, there will be every opportunity for full discussion of its proposal. I hope, too, that I have been able to make it clear that the examination of possible further south-east runway development is a quite separate matter—a difficult but necessary exercise, the outcome of which I look forward to seeing in due course.

I trust that my hon. Friend will be able to tell all his constituents that, as ever, he has made an important representation on this vital subject of interest to them. My assurances will be paralleled by the attention which BAA, as applicants, will give to the representations that he makes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 24 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## SCOTLAND

### Police

1. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss police manning levels in Scotland.

4. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to allocate additional funds to improve the level of community policing in Scotland.

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang):** I have no plans to meet COSLA to discuss levels of police manpower, which are primarily the responsibility of individual police authorities. The allocation of resources to particular policing priorities is for the chief constable. I pay specific grant on all net expenditure by police authorities. Uniformed police strength has risen by 9 per cent. since 1979.

**Mr. Gallie:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that my police authority, Strathclyde regional council, consistently undermans the force by, on average, 200 policemen? In view of the Conservative party's manifesto pledge, when will my right hon. Friend make minimum police levels mandatory?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the fact that the Strathclyde police are substantially below establishment. The authority could recruit 258 new officers and still be within establishment. My hon. Friend is right also to draw attention to the Government's commitment at the last election to take the earliest possible legislative opportunity to enforce statutory requirements to bring establishments up to full complement.

**Mr. McMaster:** It is clear from the Secretary of State's answer that he offers only apathy where we desperately need action. Is he aware that in Paisley, in the past five months alone, there have been six murders, 50 serious assaults, 27 incidents involving guns and 33 hold-ups involving knives? Why is it that, every time I write to the Scottish Office on that subject, the right hon. Gentleman dodges his responsibility for police funding and passes the buck to everyone else? When will he stop blaming other people and dodging the question and take action to get police back on the streets?

**Mr. Lang:** Not only do we now pay a higher proportion of specific grant than the last Labour Government, but we have increased spending in real terms on the police by 52 per cent. I urge the hon. Gentleman as a Member of Parliament from the Strathclyde region to urge that local authority to increase its police force to full establishment.

**Mr. Wilson:** Does the Secretary of State agree that it might not come amiss from those who were most energetic and slavish in advocating the poll tax to show a little humility in considering its consequences for local authorities? Will he give practical support to Strathclyde's efforts to civilianise many jobs, which would release police officers for the work that they should do? Will the right hon. Gentleman welcome the high-profile approach adopted by Strathclyde police during a recent weekend in Glasgow city centre? Does he recognise the widespread fear and concern that exist over the trebling of knife-carrying? Will he explain why I have had no response to my approaches to the previous Lord Advocate or the present one about the urgent need for legislative action to deal with this critical problem? When will we get action instead of fancy words?

**Mr. Lang:** I did not notice the hon. Gentleman supporting our proposal during the general election campaign to bring in legislation on knives. He need be in no doubt that we are determined to fight the increase in crime, especially crimes of violence and those involving offensive weapons. We shall strengthen the powers of the police as necessary.

### Council House Sales

2. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton):** Since 1979, some quarter of a million houses have been sold by public authorities in Scotland. Almost all were sold to sitting tenants, of which almost 178,000 were sold by local authorities.

**Mr. Knox:** What proportion of council house stock in Scotland has been sold? If the figure is still significantly different from that in England, what steps is my hon. Friend taking to increase sales in Scotland?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** About 24 per cent. of the total stock in Scotland has been sold. Some years ago England was 5 per cent. ahead, but now it is barely 1 per cent. ahead. We are speedily closing the gap and intend to introduce further legislation to speed up rent-to-mortgage sales and right-to-buy sales and to bring in further rights for Scottish council tenants.

**Dr. Godman:** Is the Minister aware that many council house tenants in Inverclyde are deterred from buying their homes because of the appalling physical condition of the houses in which they live? Dampness is a major problem for many of my constituents and Inverclyde district council desperately needs help from the Scottish Office. When will the Minister provide the council with help so that the living conditions of my constituents can be improved to a level at which they might consider buying their houses?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Allocations are made entirely on the basis of need. We shall introduce an effective right to repair for smaller repairs for council tenants and generally extend their present rights. I have visited the hon. Gentleman's constituency and I shall bear in mind his arguments before we next make allocations.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** Does my hon. Friend—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]—comprehend the hypocrisy of the Labour party——

**Hon. Members:** Reading.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. All this takes time. Scottish Members will be complaining at the end of Question Time that they have not had long enough. Sir Nicholas Fairbairn.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** Does my hon. Friend understand the hypocrisy of the Labour party, which constantly and ceaselessly complains about homelessness but which paid the most expensive architect to erect the tower blocks at Royston Hill? After discovering that nobody wanted to live in them, it blew them up, at even more cost to the public purse, leaving the public to live in one cardboard box and the taxpayer to put his cheque in the other.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My hon. and learned Friend makes an important point. We have learnt a great deal and the type of tower block of which he speaks would not be built now. I strongly recommend that Glasgow district council bring in the private sector more, to assist it in dealing with empty housing, enabling public sector resources to go much further.

## Bypasses

3. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received regarding bypass construction on Scottish roads.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have received representations from the hon. Member on bypass schemes in his constituency and was pleased that he was able to attend the opening of the A76 Cumnock and Auchinleck bypass last year. The Government have a steady programme of bypass construction and in addition have set out a number of ways in which safety and environmental improvements could be achieved in towns and villages, including traffic-calming schemes.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Yes, but does the Minister remember the letter that he sent to me on 15 May 1989, in which were set out scheme-ready dates for the Mauchline, New Cumnock, Maybole and Girvan bypasses of 1990, 1992, and 1993? Now the hon. Gentleman tells me that work will not start for at least five years on any of them. Will he think again about the priorities? He is syphoning money from those bypasses. I urge the hon. Gentleman to think again before communities are destroyed by the heavy lorries which come through the areas in which they live and to get the bypasses constructed. Otherwise I shall never be able to trust his word again.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that our strategy is to provide the bypasses that are most needed. The commitment to which he referred had to be reviewed in the light of available recources and the most pressing priorities in Scotland: the upgrading of the A74 to motorway status, the completion of the central Scotland motorway network, great improvements and full bypasses on the A96—which are going ahead—and great improvements to the A75, not to mention far-reaching proposals for the A1. We are spending 10 per cent. more on roads this year; the expenditure on roads and bridges will be about £222 million. We believe in short-term measures as well to assist the hon. Gentleman and his constituents, including traffic-calming measures and village gateways to stop excessive congestion and speeding through villages in the constituency.

## Steel Sites

5. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the reclamation and redevelopment of steel sites in Scotland.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart):** Discussions continue between British Steel, Scottish Enterprise, Lanarkshire development agency and Motherwell district council on the steel sites in Scotland which remain in British Steel ownership, concerning the contribution that British Steel will make to the reclamation and redevelopment of these sites.

**Dr. Bray:** Is the Minister aware that Ravenscraig cast its last slab of steel this morning and that steel making has now ceased in Scotland? Does he accept that, to the end, Ravenscraig workers and the community that sustained them demonstrated the skills and responsibilities needed in a modern industry? Will he therefore accelerate the reclamation and redevelopment of the steel sites in Scotland so that Motherwell, and the people who have produced steel for generations, are able to continue to make a formidable contribution to the wealth of the nation in the future, as they have done in the past?

**Mr. Stewart:** I associate myself wholly with the sentiments expressed to the House by the hon. Gentleman regarding the steel workers of Ravenscraig and the communities that support them. As for his question about future work being done on the steel sites, I am encouraged by the agreement between British Steel and Scottish Enterprise on 15 April jointly to examine the best future use of the sites. The hon. Gentleman will, I think, know that the independent environmental audit that was recently commissioned by British Steel to examine the Ravenscraig site should help to identify the environmental issues better and to form an informed judgment on the way forward. I look forward to discussing later today the more detailed matters with the hon. Gentleman, the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) and Motherwell district council.

**Mr. Devlin:** On behalf of the steel-making constituencies of Teesside, may I point out to my hon. Friend that when a steel plant closes and a massive slimming exercise takes place, as has happened in our part of the world, where 56,000 people lost their jobs during the early 1980s, it does not necessarily mean that that is the end of the road for the communities concerned? The work of British Steel Industries and other support agencies that came into the area—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman not to make a speech to the House but to ask his question.

**Mr. Devlin:** Cannot other agencies that come in on the back of a steel closure of this magnitude lay the foundations for a very successful thriving economy for an area such as Motherwell in times to come?

**Mr. Stewart:** My hon. Friend makes an extremely valid point. It is now necessary for everyone to look forward to the future in Lanarkshire. I believe that that is what people are doing. We have poured in massive sums of public money. We have the enterprise zone. We have put in place a range of measures. Today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is approving £9·7 million expenditure by the Lanarkshire development agency for the development of phase 1 of the freight village at Mossend. About 1,600 jobs will result from phase 1 and the terminal there. The enterprise zone will result in 17,000 jobs, gross. We must, therefore, look to the future. That is what the Government are doing. That is what I believe the overwhelming majority of the people of Lanarkshire want to happen.

**Dr. Reid:** On the day when the last slab was cast in Motherwell after 112 years of steel making, may I pay my tribute to the steel workers and their families and say to the Minister that if his Government had shown half the dedication and commitment to the steel workers of Lanarkshire that the steel workers have shown to the industry, they would not be out of work today. Since the Minister and the Government have done damn all to save steel making in Motherwell over the past few years, will he at least give a pledge today that the Government will hold British Steel to its responsibility to provide finance for the reclamation of those steel sites? I want a concrete pledge today, because British Steel has produced nothing but pain in the past and has given us a present that is berefit of hope. It must not be allowed to destroy the future of Lanarkshire in the way that it has destroyed over the past 10 years.

**Mr. Stewart:** I reject the hon. Gentleman's allegation about the Government. I note that he did not mention the fact that when the Government came to office, British Steel was losing £1·86 billion a year, or about £5 million a day. That could not possibly continue. We must now look to the future. I pay tribute to the efforts of the steel workers. The Government are backing their commitment with real resources. I hope that members of the Labour party, who, I presume, want an improvement in the economy of Lanarkshire and more jobs in Lanarkshire, do not fall into the trap of talking down the area's prosperity.

**Mr. Dewar:** In the circumstances, I am a little surprised that the Secretary of State did not answer the question himself. I must say to the Minister that it seems to me that sympathy and tributes are not difficult to give, but we want a commitment that there will be a matching effort by the Government not only in the initial stages of the crisis facing the Lanarkshire economy but sustained over a considerable period so that a future can be built. Does the Minister accept that it is essential that British Steel take full responsibility for dealing with the legacy of dereliction and contamination that it is leaving behind? If British Steel does not accept that full responsibility, will the Minister take legal powers that will allow him to insist that in this case the polluter really pays?

**Mr. Stewart:** We have not just paid tributes to the steel workers of Lanarkshire. The hon. Gentleman criticises the Government, but he never answers the question; what would the Labour party have done if it had been in power? It would have done nothing that the Government have not done. Our commitment has been matched by funds, for the medium and long term certainly. I am discussing the details of reclamation and clearance with hon. Members, and the hon. Gentleman will know the legal framework within which the Government will have to operate.

## NHS Trusts

6. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to alter the regulations governing hospital trusts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The activities of NHS trusts in Scotland are monitored by the management executive of the national health service and, through contracts, by health boards purchasing the trust services. Should the interests of patient care require alteration of the regulations, the Government will do that. For the moment, we have no such plans.

**Dr. Strang:** Is there not a real danger that individual hospital trusts will undermine strategic planning by health boards? Could not a situation arise in Lothian whereby the health board will provide orthopaedic facilities in the new major hospital to be built just outside Edinburgh, but when that hospital comes into service the Princess Margaret Rose, which has become a trust, will continue to provide the same service, especially as many of its customers might well be GP fund holders and customers from outwith the health board's area?

**Mr. Stewart:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State have made it clear again and again that the services provided by the trusts will be determined by the contract entered into by the health boards. On the exceedingly rare occasions when a trust and a health board could disagree on the nature of services to be provided—the thought which is at the back of the hon. Gentleman's question—I confirm that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has the power of direction.

**Mr. Dickens:** Why does my hon. Friend think that the Scottish nation should be denied the excellence of national health service trust hospitals? After all, in England are they not a great success, treating many more patients than ever before—in fact, 6 per cent. more? That is patient care, and it is coming to Scotland. That is the beauty of the Union of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Stewart:** I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that the undoubted benefits of hospital trusts, to which he rightly refers, are of course coming to Scotland. There have been 18 expressions of interest, and my hon. Friend will be interested to know that among those expressing interest are the West Lothian unit in Livingston and Monklands district general hospital.

**Mr. Watson:** The Minister will know that one of those 18 expressions of interest came from the Victoria infirmary in my constituency, which also serves part of his constituency. Will he give a commitment that, before considering whether to allow the opt-out, he will consult

the people who use the hospital, and the community as a whole? Will he take on board their views or will he, as I suspect, deny them a say, just as he is denying the people of Scotland a say in their constitutional future through a referendum? He is doing that because he knows what the outcome would be—it would show that he was totally out of step with the people of Scotland and has no right or legitimacy to speak on their behalf.

**Mr. Stewart:** I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I do not accept the views of Scotland United on such matters. In answer to his other question, we have made it clear several times that we do not see ballots, either within the hospital concerned or in the broader locality, as a basis for determining trust status. The public consultation phase lasts three months and provides ample opportunity for the views of staff and public to be known. The hon. Gentleman referred specifically to the Victoria infirmary and may be interested to know that I saw four consultants last Saturday morning—*[Interruption.]* I must inform hon. Members that I hold constituency surgeries on Saturday mornings. I saw the four consultants because they are constituents of mine and had points to put to me.

## Governance

7. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those organisations which he had met as part of the Prime Minster's taking stock exercise in relation to the government of Scotland; and when he expects to come forward with proposals.

14. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further stock he has taken on the future governance of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** We are continuing our consideration of arrangements for the governance of Scotland and will report back to the House in due course.

**Mr. Welsh:** Is not it true that the Government have no new ideas or proposals and are not willing to put the constitutional issue to the voters of Scotland? If private industry took as long over stocktaking as the Prime Minister does, it would end up bankrupt. Is not "taking stock" a cynical exercise in doing nothing at all?

**Mr. Lang:** No, it is not. After 13 years in office, the Government are bubbling over with new ideas in all areas of policy, as the hon. Gentleman will see if he reads our general election manifesto. The Government are indeed taking stock and we shall present our proposals, which I am sure will interest the hon. Gentleman, when they are ready.

**Mr. Galloway:** Having padlocked our steel industry today and having already murdered our coal and shipbuilding industries and decimated our engineering industry, the Government do not even have the guts to face the people of Scotland in a democratic test at the ballot box—a referendum. Why are the people of Denmark and France to be given a democratic referendum to decide their constitutional future in Europe, yet we in Scotland are denied the chance of a referendum on our democratic future? Why do we not have a referendum on Maastricht and Britain's future in Europe—and on Scotland's future in Britain? Why do the Government not have the guts to face the music in a democratic test?

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. Gentleman speaks with all the authority of a rave promoter at a time when raves are going out of fashion. If attendances at his raves continue to fall at the present rate, he will soon be able to hold them in his back garden. The Government had the guts to face the electorate in a general election. That was our multi-option referendum—and the electorate of the United Kingdom turned their backs on separation and devolution—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Has the Secretary of State finished his answer? I could not hear.

**Mr. Lang:** Yes.

**Mr. Biffen:** Will my right hon. Friend use this opportunity to assess what subsidiarity offers him in regard to the scope and discharge of his duties? In view of the widespread interest in this topic, will he ensure that he reports back to the House before we return from the summer recess? Above all, will he confirm that he will assess subsidiarity in relation to Scotland on the basis that Scotland is an historic nation state, not a cap-in-hand Euro-region?

**Mr. Lang:** My right hon. Friend need have no doubt about the Conservatives' recognition of Scotland's importance, both in historic national terms and in terms of its part and place within the United Kingdom. All our consideration of proposals will take place against a background of determination to uphold both Scotland's place within the United Kingdom, and the integrity of the Union.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** Is it not strange that the Opposition parties daily betray their obsession with the idea of the Government taking stock, while at the same time arrogantly dismissing the greatest stock-taking exercise of all—that undertaken by the people of Scotland in the general election? Will my right hon. Friend remind the Opposition that, when the Scottish people took stock, it was the Conservatives who increased their vote and their representation?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A substantial majority of the Scottish electorate voted for parties that support the Union. The difference between the Opposition and the Government is that we regard the constitution of the United Kingdom as something to be cherished and guarded, while they regard it as a political plaything to be used to their advantage.

**Mr. Canavan:** Will the Secretary of State remind his hon. Friends that, in the recent general election, three quarters of Scottish voters rejected the Tory Government and supported parties that were committed to the establishment of a Scottish Parliament? Let me take the right hon. Gentleman back to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway). Why is he so reluctant to accept that the most democratic way of taking stock would be to let the people decide in a multi-option referendum? Is he afraid that the outcome of such a referendum would show overwhelming rejection of the status quo, and overwhelming support for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament?

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. Gentleman forgets that before polling day his party was opposed to a referendum on constitutional matters. Labour Members planned to force

through the establishment of a Scottish Parliament without such a referendum; only since the election have they changed their tune. They planned to take power with a minority of votes, and to use that as a basis on which to force their policies through, without engaging in the consultation that they now regard as essential.

**Mr. Rowe:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that, during the general election campaign in my part of the country —where there is not a single Labour Member—the number of people in my constituency, including a large number of Scots who had taken advantage of the historic Union to come south and make their fortunes— *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have stopped other hon. Members who have not put their question. I am now waiting to hear the question that the hon. Gentleman is about to ask the Secretary of State.

**Mr. Rowe:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that there was widespread support for the Union of the United Kingdom, and will he comment?

**Mr. Lang:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that that support was reflected in the general election result. The Labour party proposed devolution throughout the United Kingdom, but it was in Scotland, where the proposal was most detailed, that the swing against them was most substantial.

**Mr. Dewar:** If there is a continuing dispute about the opinions of the Scottish public—which there clearly is—why does not the Secretary of State consider a referendum as a way of deciding the issue, given that he is so confident that he is right?

The Secretary of State will recall the pledge made by Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, the Minister of State, Scottish Office. Lord Fraser said that the Government were committed to constitutional change that was "substantial and not cosmetic". Does he still stand by that? If the Secretary of State is indeed bubbling over with new ideas, will he tell us when just one of them—however modest —will be allowed to creep into the public domain?

**Mr. Lang:** I know that the hon. Gentleman used that quotation in good faith, but I have to tell him that it is a misquotation. I shall be happy to explain to him afterwards, at greater length and in detail, why and how that is so. I can assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that the Government are taking stock of the matter and will bring forward proposals and lay them before the House when they have considered them fully.

## Local Authorities

8. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans for unitary local authorities in Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** The Government propose, subject to further extensive consultation, to move towards the introduction of single-tier councils throughout Scotland. I intend to issue a second consultation paper in the autumn setting out a range of illustrative options for the new structure.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Would not unitary authorities have a number of important advantages, including cutting out costly and sometimes confusing overlaps in responsibilities and increasing accountability? Would not such enhanced unitary authorities have the added bonus of providing an appropriate platform for many Opposition Members to display their undoubted talents and abilities?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the greater strength and coherence that can derive from single-tier authorities. I regard the possible development of single-tier authorities in Scotland as a way of strengthening local government and making it more coherent, more readily identifiable with local areas and more accountable to local electorates.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** Does the Secretary of State accept that many Opposition Members know a little more about Scottish local government than the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim)? Does the right hon. Gentleman also accept, given the short period that has elapsed since the Wheatley report and the reorganisation of Scottish local government in 1975, that the local authorities have acted well and in the interests of Scotland, despite the enormous constraints and demands placed on them by the Government, who are perceived in Scotland as an anti-local government Government? That being so, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why in England it is possible to have a commission to review local government whereas in Scotland it is not?

**Mr. Lang:** I certainly pay tribute to the dedication and professionalism of many involved in local government and to the efficiency with which many local authorities, both regional and district, deliver local services. Nevertheless, events have moved on substantially and quickly over the two decades since the Wheatley commission reported. As regards a changing role for local authorities, we see considerable advantage in moving towards single-tier authorities. However, we shall be introducing another consultation paper in the autumn which will enable further extensive consultation to take place.

**Mr. Worthington:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that local people want democratically elected and locally accountable councils to run their services? Can he further confirm that he intends that all services that are currently run by local government will continue to be run by local government and, in particular, that education will be run by local government in the future? Will he confirm that that is so?

**Mr. Lang:** I certainly support the hon. Gentleman's belief in strengthening local democracy. Part of our purpose in bringing forward the reforms is to strengthen local democracy, not to undermine it. The hon. Gentleman asked about the handling of individual services, and that is a matter on which we shall wish to consult widely. It would be quite wrong for me to give a commitment of any kind on any particular service at this stage. I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman's reaction to our consultation paper when it appears.

## Sunday Trading

9. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the Scottish law on Sunday trading.

**Mr. Lang:** Since the beginning of this year, I have received two representations advocating the imposition of restrictions on Sunday trading in Scotland.

**Mr. Marshall:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, which shows that the majority of Scottish people are satisfied with total deregulation. Does he agree, therefore, that it would be immoral, illogical and hypocritical for Scottish Members to vote to impose upon the people of England and Wales restrictions that do not apply in Scotland?

**Mr. Lang:** My hon. Friend puts his point effectively. I would simply say that it would be impertinent for me, as a Scottish Minister, to advance my view on what my English colleagues should do with regard to shop hours in England.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that there are problems with the law on Sunday trading in Scotland, particularly in respect of the lack of protection for employees who do not want to work on Sundays? Will the right hon. Gentleman therefore undertake to look again at the legislation to see whether better protection might be provided for employees who, because of their religious convictions, do not want to work on Sundays?

**Mr. Lang:** That is a matter for negotiation within the various industries and with the various unions involved. I am not aware of any great dissatisfaction. As I said, I have received only two representations about the matter this year. I believe that the arrangements in Scotland work pretty well and are infinitely adaptable to suit the needs of all concerned.

## Fishing Industry

10. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the consequences of the one-net rule for the village-based fishing industry.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro):** The one-net rule forms part of a package of measures to improve conservation of fish stocks. The package is important for the future well-being of the industry. Certain groups of fishermen are concerned about the implications of the rule and I am keeping the matter under review.

**Mr. Campbell:** Does the Minister accept that that answer will bring no comfort to the fishing industry in Scotland and in particular, to that part of the industry located in my constituency? The Minister must understand that the imposition of the one-net rule, without changes to the by-catch regulations, is likely to cause a large number of fishermen to move from prawn fishing to white fishing. The one-net rule will have the reverse effect: it will bring increasing pressure to bear on fish stocks. Why are the Government so supine in their efforts to protect the village-based fishing industry in Scotland?

**Sir Hector Monro:** I am sorry that the hon. and learned Gentleman does not seem to understand conservation. It is absolutely crucial that there are greater restrictions than at present if there is to be a fishing future for Scotland —and I am very keen that that should be so. I have said that I am considering the situation. The rule has been in force for only three weeks. If there is evidence and good reason, I will give it further consideration.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Does not the Minister realise that the measure, as currently proposed and implemented, is not working to the benefit of conservation? I endorse all the points made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). Why do Ministers responsible for fisheries in Scotland consistently bring back regulations which are not EC-wide, but which apply solely to Scotland to the disadvantage of our fishing communities, which are extremely important for our rural economies and for ensuring the viability of many other communities?

**Sir Hector Monro:** Of course I share the hon. Lady's view that fishing is vital to rural areas in Scotland. However, she must also understand that if there are no fish, there will be no industry. That is why we have to be so strict on conservation. The hon. Lady must also understand that under the by-catch rule, there may be a 60 per cent. catch of white fish. If that is insufficient, the fishermen can go home to harbour and change to a larger mesh and start again.

## Juvenile Crime

11. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chief constables to discuss juvenile crime.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets chief constables from time to time to discuss a wide range of policing issues. Also, my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State has today invited chief constables to meet him to consider the substantial and alarming increase in the illegal use of shotguns and other firearms.

**Mr. Hogg:** Does the Minister accept that there is some correlation between juvenile crime and under-age drinking? Will he introduce proposals to strengthen the licensing laws so that they are better able to control abuse? Will he also try to speed up the report on drinking in public places with a view to extending it to the whole of Scotland?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We have reformed the law on licensing. We stiffened up the law in respect of late-night licences where there was evidence of disorder. The byelaws and experimental schemes that are in operation will be reviewed in due course and we will then consider, when it is appropriate, whether they should be extended throughout Scotland. However, that is still some months away.

**Sir Nicholas Fairbairn:** Does my hon. Friend comprehend that frequently what is forbidden is preferred and the fact that in Scotland on Sunday one can shop and do what one likes, which has always been the norm in Scotland——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Clearly, the hon. and learned Gentleman is referring to the wrong question. Therefore, I call Mr. Michael J. Martin.

**Mr. Michael J. Martin:** Hardly a night goes by in my constituency when children as young as 10 or 11 do not steal cars. That resulted in a fatality in the Possilpark.

Doctors who happened to walk into a gang of fighting youths were brutally beaten up. That is happening not only in my constituency but throughout the west of Scotland. Is not it time that the Minister met the chief constables of Scotland to discuss that serious problem?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Yes. As I have mentioned, the Minister of State is writing today to the chief constables inviting them to a meeting with him, particularly to discuss the alarming increase in the use of firearms. I strongly support community policing. On urban aid, we give the best part of £1 million to a variety of projects dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, safe neighbourhood projects, security assistance for small businesses and household security measures. Much is being done. We have increased capital allocations to the police by £6 million this year.

## Poll Tax

12. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regarding the recovery of poll tax arrears; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The subject of community charge collection has been discussed at a number of my right hon. Friend's meetings with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities about local government finance matters in the past year or two.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am sure that the Minister shares with me the concern of many people who have bigger poll tax bills because of those who have not paid. Will he accept that one of the biggest non-payers are the Government, who could have been paying a substantial contribution from central Government funds to meet the rebates of many who could not pay? How much would have been due from central Government? Will the Minister now make that sum available to local authorities, or is the Government's policy "can pay, won't pay"?

**Mr. Stewart:** Of course we shall not do that. The non-payment problem certainly does not apply to the hon. Gentleman's constituency. For Orkney in 1989-90, the percentage of what was actually paid as against the payment assumption was 111·8 per cent.—12 per cent. more than estimated. In 1990-91, the figure was 100 per cent., and at the end of March it was 85·7 per cent. The problem has been variable. Frankly, it has arisen where authorities have been reluctant to use all available powers at the outset. That has created a non-payment culture, and that is what has created the problem.

**Dr. Liam Fox:** Will my hon. Friend give a firm commitment to recover as much arrears as is humanly possible? If he does not, the burden will fall upon decent law-abiding poll tax payers not only in Scotland but in the whole United Kingdom.

**Mr. Stewart:** My hon. Friend is right. Within Strathclyde there is tremendous resentment at the fact that people have to pay for those who have not yet paid the community charge. Local authorities have a statutory duty to collect outstanding charges. I make it clear to my hon. Friend and to the House that there is absolutely no question of an amnesty for non-payers. That would be wholly unfair to the majority of law-abiding taxpayers.

**Mr. Maxton:** Is it not the case, however, that the majority of those who have not paid are among the very poorest, who were forced to pay the absurd minimum 20 per cent. payment? Even now, the Minister could resolve at least some problems by abolishing the 20 per cent. minimum payment, backdated to 1 April. He should also restore to local authorities the right to look at each individual case on its merits before deciding whether to take action against a person. If he did that, many problems would be resolved.

**Mr. Stewart:** People on income support have had their benefit uprated each year to take account of the liability for the maximum 20 per cent. that they pay. It has been made clear again and again that there will be no removal of the 20 per cent. rule for the community charge for 1992-93, because it is a personal tax. There has been much publicity about some of the measures being taken by Strathclyde and Lothian in respect of precisely the people about whom the hon. Gentleman is talking, and that is those who have not paid but can pay. It is absolutely right that those authorities concentrate on doing that. My criticism is that they did not use the powers available to them sufficiently quickly and, therefore, a climate of non-payment was allowed to build up in some areas.

## A1

13. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans are being prepared for dualling sections of the A1 which are not already listed in the roads programme.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Preparation work is under way to dual the A1 between Tranent and Haddington and Haddington and Dunbar, between the Dunbar cement works junction and Innerwick, between the southern terminal of the Cockburnspath bypass and Penmanshiel and at Lemington. In England, two schemes to complete the Alnwick bypass are being taken forward. Further schemes to complete the dualling between Newcastle and north of Alnwick are being identified with a view to their inclusion in the roads programme.

**Mr. Beith:** Does the Minister recognise that if the announcement that he made on 2 March is to have substance, the process will have to be maintained? New projects will have to be brought into the roads programme in both Scotland and England each year if there is to be a complete dual carriageway from Newcastle to Edinburgh. Dualling would make the road much safer and worthy of its strategic requirements.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree with the right hon. Gentleman and I look forward to meeting him and the other interested Members of Parliament on 7 July when we shall have a progress report.

**Mr. Home Robertson:** I look forward to that meeting. I welcome the Minister's announcement of progress on dualling sections of the road in East Lothian. When will he give us an idea of the timetable for those works and, indeed, for completing the whole of the dualling of the A1 from Musselburgh to Morpeth, in accordance with the undertaking given by the Government—undoubtedly by pure coincidence—just before the general election?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government's aim to dual the A1 has been clearly stated. Firm and ambitious plans for the next stage of work have been announced in some detail. Progress outwith the public expenditure planning period must, for the A1 as elsewhere in Scotland, including Ayrshire, depend on the resources available and the relative claims of schemes elsewhere. Obviously, we take into account the importance of the A1 project. The commitments given by the Government are more significant than those given by the Labour party.

**Mr. Trimble:** Is there any provision in the roads programme for the further improvement of the A75, in particular to bypass the village of——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I was being most generous to the hon. Gentleman because I believed that his question had a connection. It is most unfair to take advantage of my generosity.

## Housing Policy

15. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss housing policy in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I expect to meet representatives of the housing committee of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 24 September, when a range of housing issues will be discussed.

**Mr. McAllion:** Will the Government review their policy on housing, under which the best of council housing has been sold off and not replaced and much of the rest reduced to little better than welfare housing? Does the Minister understand that if the Government can claim to have achieved anything during the past three Parliaments, it is the creation of housing apartheid in Scotland? Large tracts of our cities are cut off and crucified by high levels of unemployment, poverty and crime. Such areas have a parallel only in the impoverished third world. Why, in a country as rich and wealthy as Scotland, are the Government, whom we never elected, failing so miserably to meet the aspirations of ordinary Scots to have a decent house to live in?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** A few days ago I was at Whitfield in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. People were celebrating the 1,000 jobs produced by the partnership as well as the housing regeneration. If the hon. Gentleman had been present, he would know that substantial progress had been made in his constituency. We also intend to reform the law on the right to buy and introduce streamlined procedures. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that if the houses that were sold had not been bought, the same families would have continued to rent them for a reasonable time. I also opened the Stopover project in Dundee, which is doing a good job for the homeless. It serves a useful purpose.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** May I thank the Minister for finally agreeing to visit Maryhill to see the worst of the housing there. I am sure that he found it informative. Does he recognise that when housing associations attempt to provide housing for people with special needs, they face particular difficulties because of the complexity of funding, which is spread between social work departments, health boards and Scottish Homes? Will he meet appropriate representatives during the summer recess to seek to overcome that problem and to give some reassurance to the housing associations that specialise in that important task?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Obviously, we want to give the maximum encouragement to housing for special needs. I should be grateful if the hon. Member could give me a note of all the difficulties that she is experiencing. I shall look into them thoroughly. Scottish Homes has a budget of £300 million and ought to be able to make suitable arrangements on those matters, but perhaps the hon. Member could get in touch with me.

## Mar Lodge

17. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to assist in the preservation of the unique natural heritage present in the Mar Lodge estate.

**Sir Hector Monro:** I have asked Scottish Natural Heritage to seek a management agreement with the owner of Mar Lodge estate, which will safeguard the estate's outstanding natural heritage qualities for the future.

**Mr. Kynoch:** I very much welcome my hon. Friend's announcement, but I should be interested to know whether he is aware whether the Mar Lodge estate is still on the market. If it is, what will he do to revive the purchasing consortium, which has temporarily withdrawn its interest, largely because of its inability to fund future running expenses?

**Sir Hector Monro:** In 1990, the owner planned to sell, but the estate has never formally been on the market. I assure my hon. Friend, who obviously takes a great interest in that area of his constituency, that we are anxious, through Scottish Natural Heritage, to set up a management agreement and to maintain and safeguard that fine example of natural heritage. We shall be in close touch with the owner, if the consortium comes into being again and finds a positive way forward.

**Mr. Dalyell:** How can the Secretary of State for the Environment make the sort of speech that I heard this morning at the natural history museum, and how can the Prime Minister speak as he did at Rio to developing countries, when we cannot do anything constructive to safeguard Mar Lodge? Does the Minister realise that the management agreements are unlikely to save the ancient forest? Since my friendly and constructive meeting with him in his room, what follow-up has there been about someone from the Government, or sponsored by the Government, talking to Mr. Kluge properly about the possibility of a Kluge memorial park?

**Sir Hector Monro:** I agree that we had a useful discussion and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are determined to look after the important parts of the estate through a management agreement. He also knows that it will form part of the Cairngorm working party report later this year, under Magnus Magnusson's chairmanship. We are not sitting back idly, but are reacting positively to see what can be done in a difficult situation.

## Overseas Adoptions

18. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the adoption by British couples of orphans from Romania and other countries overseas; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The adoption of children from Romania is now subject to an agreement concluded in March between the United Kingdom and the Romanian Committee for Adoptions. There have been no recent specific representations about the adoption of children from Romania or other countries overseas.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my hon. Friend work closely with his colleagues in other Departments, in view of the difficulties that have arisen with the Romanian adoption committee's agreement, which has prevented more than a handful of Romania's 100,000 orphans being adopted by British couples?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Yes, I shall certainly do so. My hon. Friend obviously speaks on behalf of prospective parents and I appreciate their concern. On 20 January we consulted on a wide review of adoption law and on how inter-country adoption might be integrated with existing adoption arrangements and immigration procedures in a Scottish consultation paper. If my hon. Friend has any representations they will be welcome. The agreement between Britain and Romania has insisted on the highest standard of assessment for prospective adopters, and similar agreements have been struck between Romania and other countries. There seem to be limited prospects for change.

**Mr. McFall:** Will the Minister join me to congratulate the Strathclyde appeal for Romanian children which, for the past year, has been working in Romania and has gathered more than £1 million from citizens, both young and old, in Strathclyde? It has done a marvellous job at Guru Ochnitei, where it has provided accommodation for 350 severely disabled children, due to the generosity of the citizens of Scotland. Does he agree that we should listen to the Romanians and should not allow people to go to Romania to plunder and take the brightest and the best of the Romanian children, but should instead work with the Romanians, as the Strathclyde appeal did, to bring Romania's health care policy into the 21st century?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We very much welcome the activities in Strathclyde in that connection. The hon. Gentleman is right that this is essentially a matter for the Romanians and that the scope for change is very limited. However, it is right that so much concern has been shown by prospective adopters in this country and that such matters are now being dealt with thoroughly and professionally.

## NHS Trusts

20. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the likely timetable for hospital opt-outs in Scotland.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The timing of national health service trust applications is largely a matter for hospitals themselves. For those considering trust status in April 1993 applications will be required by the end of this month. Hospitals interested in becoming trusts in 1994 will be required to make formal declarations of interest by 30 September 1992 and applications by 31 March 1993. This cycle will be repeated annually.

**Mr. Chisholm:** The Minister seeks to perpetuate the fiction that opt-out hospitals in Scotland arise out of demand from hospitals and local communities. As everybody knows, the policy of opt-out hospitals has been imposed on the people of Scotland, against their wishes, by the Scottish Office. A timetable for that imposition exists within the Scottish Office. Is not it true that most hospitals in Edinburgh, for example, are scheduled to opt out in 1994, including the Western general hospital, which serves my constituency?

**Mr. Stewart:** On the first point, my reply was the answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman tabled on the Order Paper.

It is up to hospital boards to express interest and put in applications. We are not imposing the policy, but we are encouraged by the level of interest that has been expressed around the country since the threat of a Labour Government was so effectively removed by the people of the United Kingdom.

# Points of Order

3.32 pm

**Mr. Dennis Canavan** (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, earlier today, I gave written notice to your office that I intended to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of debating a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of this Government to respond to the democratic wishes of the people."

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member is being a little unfair. I have already considered his application and he knows my decision. The matter has been considered very seriously and he should not now raise it on the Floor of the House. I hope that the hon. Member will leave the matter there because he knows my decision and our procedures.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time.

**Mr. Canavan:** I have not even raised my point of order.

I realise that you, Madam Speaker, have absolute discretion in whether such an application is accepted or rejected. However, your staff informed me that there was no way in which you would even listen to my application. Irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the issue, which is important to the people of Scotland, that is an attack on the rights of Back Benchers to raise legitimate points on the Floor of the House.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, please to explain which part of the Standing Order No. 20 I fell foul of. On my reading of the Standing Order, I stuck by the rules that it lays down. I kept to the 12 noon deadline and I put in written notice, yet I am deprived even of the opportunity to state my case on the Floor of the House.

**Madam Speaker:** Standing Order No. 20 allows me to hear applications for debates on

"a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration."

To qualify for consideration, a matter must contain some new element of urgency that distinguishes it from other important issues of long standing. I cannot allow this valued opportunity to be endangered by improper use, and I shall continue to decline to hear applications that do not meet the basic criteria. The hon. Gentleman's application falls into that category, and I can hear nothing further about it.

**Mr. George Galloway** (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is not what happened this afternoon symptomatic of the contempt for Scottish questions shown by Conservative Members? Three Conservative Members were called by you to ask questions: you had to rebuke the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) for speaking for too long and not coming to the point; the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) asked about Scottish local government; and the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) asked two questions, one of which you declared to be wrong. Shortly after asking their questions, all three Members left the Chamber, the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross weaving his way unsteadily from the Chamber——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I need no colourful or picturesque descriptions. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would come directly to his point of order.

**Mr. Galloway:** The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross is unlikely to need colourful or picturesque descriptions from me. I am stating the truth as people saw it on television. He did stagger from the Chamber——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Please come to the point of order for the Chair.

**Mr. Galloway:** Is there no basic requirement on Members who ask questions to stay in their places until the end of Scottish questions? Is it just a big game for Conservative Members? Are they swept off the Terrace to come here, do their job and then leave?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have already made my views known on this. We must extend various common courtesies to each other, not only during debates but at Question Time. I remind the House that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and when Members rise and show an interest, and when they have questions on the Order Paper, I have an obligation to call them.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), Madam Speaker. You said that there was no new element of urgency and that that was the reason for your decision. However, following last month's Scottish questions, I gave notice to you that I intended to raise on the Adjournment of the House the question of a referendum, only to be told that I was not allowed to do so under the Standing Orders of the House because it involved legislation or expense. That ruling was given to me only yesterday.

Is not that a new element of urgency, because it is important that the House has an opportunity to hear the case for a referendum on a Scottish Parliament? It may not be especially urgent for hon. Members who represent English constituencies because this is an English Parliament—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".]—but Scotland does not have the Parliament that it wants——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. There is nothing new about the rules governing the Adjournment of the House. I must work according to our rules and procedures, and I am sure that the entire House wants me to continue to uphold those rules and procedures.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard on many occasions in the House assurances from Ministers that they were doing all that they could to safeguard the INMOS jobs in Newport. Today's *Electronic Times* contains a report by Michel Carpentier of DGXIII saying that the Department of Trade and Industry has never been in touch with him on that matter. He believes that it is stupid to transfer the jobs from Newport to Italy and that money is available. Have you, Madam Speaker, been asked to allow the appropriate Minister to make a statement or a confession?

**Madam Speaker:** I can give a very short answer to that question: no, I have not.

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members to spend time calling for a referendum in Scotland when, during the general election, they said that they were against a referendum?

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order for me, and it only lengthens the time spent on points of order. I have heard bogus points of order, but that one really went over the top.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I listened with respect to your ruling on the request of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) for a debate under Standing Order No. 20. I find it exceptionally difficult to understand the justification for saying that the proposal contains no new element when the arguments have not been heard. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman would have been able to raise relevant new elements during the debate. Are you, Madam Speaker, saying that when we apply for a Standing Order No. 20 debate we have to write our full speech in advance so that you and your staff may decide whether it contains a new element?

**Madam Speaker:** I think that the authorities of the House and I know when there are any new elements. I am sure that the hon. Lady is not seeking to challenge my ruling.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you received a request from the Government to make a change in the Government's programme to allow the introduction of legislation to protect pension funds? I ask that in view of the fact that £2 million has been taken from the Bellings group pension fund. The matter is becoming a scandal and the Government need to take action to protect pension funds in this country.

**Madam Speaker:** I have nothing to add: I have received no request for a statement to be made.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to your ruling, Madam Speaker, in respect of the application made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr Canavan), will you explain what evidence you require to be submitted to you before your officials rule that a matter is unsuitable for debate? It is my understanding that, in the past, supporting evidence has normally been heard in the House, not in the Speaker's office.

**Madam Speaker:** I think that the hon. Gentleman is raising with me what I regard as a classic hypothetical case. I said that to qualify for consideration a matter had not only to contain a new element of urgency to distinguish it from other important long-standing issues, but had to be on a specific and important matter that needed urgent consideration. I do not believe that our business today or tomorrow should be changed in order to discuss the subject raised by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan). I hope that hon. Members will not continue to challenge my ruling.

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Special Grant Report (No. 4) and the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992 are on today's Order Paper for debate. It appears that it is your intention that we should debate the two reports together. If that is so, it is a break from the custom of the House, which is to have a separate debate on Welsh rate support grant orders. With great respect, may I suggest that we should keep to the usual form of proceeding so that Welsh Members may have a better opportunity to contribute to the debate and we have more chance to hear Welsh Office Ministers?

**Madam Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. and learned Gentleman's point and understand it, but it was agreed last Friday by the House that the two items should be debated together within a three-hour period.

**Mr. Jimmy Wray** (Glasgow, Provan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The most important item on today's Order Paper is question 8 on local government reform, which will affect the life of every councillor in Scotland. I could not understand why you allowed only one Opposition Back Bencher to ask a question on the subject. I think that was absolutely disgraceful.

**Madam Speaker:** I have a broad back, and I am developing a thick skin.

**Mr. Canavan:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have no wish to challenge your right to accept or reject an application under Standing Order No. 20. However, for future guidance, if in future an hon. Member decides to make a written application to you for a Standing Order No. 20 emergency debate, should he or she outline in the application any new evidence that he or she thinks should be brought to your attention there and then or will there be a further opportunity to present the new evidence on the Floor of the House?

**Madam Speaker:** That is certainly not necessary. I want to be helpful to the House and to individual Members, and if Members think that it helps me to come to a judgment by putting new evidence before me, it will always be very welcome and I shall look at it most carefully.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am not in any way challenging your ruling. As you are probably aware, the Procedure Committee recommended some years ago that any application under what was then Standing Order No. 9 should be put to the Speaker in his office. That recommendation was considered by the House and, I am glad to say, it was rejected in 1979. You will also know that in 1977-78, in the last couple of years of the Labour Government, there were usually three or four applications per day under Standing Order No. 9. It is my understanding—and you will correct me if I am wrong—that until quite recently, although the Speaker may well have deprecated some of the applications, he decided to hear them.

It seems that there are two problems to overcome. Under "Erskine May" and the appropriate Standing Order you decide whether an application on the Floor of the House is to be successful. If it is, you will grant a debate. However, it now seems that even before the application is made on the Floor of the House you will consider whether it should be made at all, in the same way as your predecessor did—I doubt whether his predecessor followed the same course. In effect, that means that we have to convince you that there is a case even though if the application is made on the Floor of the House there is no guarantee that you will grant it.

**Madam Speaker:** I am not changing the practice. I cannot hear applications that I regard as not getting to first base. On occasions I will hear an application, but I have to determine in the first place whether it gets over the first hurdle. There is no change whatever in procedure.

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Apart from the problem of irritation caused by English Tory Members flitting in and out during Scottish Question Time, may I appeal to you once again about the problem of Ministers giving over-long answers to questions? I am sure that that practice deprives two or even three Back Benchers of the opportunity to put spontaneous supplementary questions.

**Madam Speaker:** I have noted the hon. Gentleman's point. At the risk of being rather too curious and too observant, may I say that I have noticed that he too popped out after his question.

## BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 10 JULY

*Members successful in the ballot were:*

Mr. Paul Murphy
Mr. George Howarth
Mrs. Jane Kennedy

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.],*

That the draft Companies (Single Member Private Limited Companies) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Question agreed to.*

# Disabled Persons (Services)

3.48 pm

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid Kent): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to empower local authorities to make certain severely disabled persons accountable for expenditure on their care plans.

This is a modest measure designed to assist the Government to solve a problem that has caused them embarrassment more by an accident of history than fault of their own. The problem is that some men and women who are severely physically disabled, with relatively little control over their bodies but with their minds entirely unimpaired, want to remain in charge of their own lives to as great an extent as possible. They want to be able to decide for themselves when they get up in the morning or go to bed at night, decisions which for most of us are part of normal adult life. Yet under present arrangements, whereby local authorities have to provide the domiciliary care staff that are needed to allow disabled clients to live in the community, it is impossible to guarantee such freedoms.

Take, for example, the case of Ms. C, who has a senior position in a company running training and education courses throughout the country. Sometimes she has to ask her care assistants to arrive at 5 am to ensure that she is up in time for a meeting. Sometimes she has to stay away overnight and take a personal assistant with her. No local authority provided service can offer that degree of flexibility and control. Yet until recently Ms. C has been able to make her own arrangements because the local authority has been paying directly to her the part of her total care budget that is needed for domiciliary care. She has recruited, trained and deployed the staff that she needs and accounted for the money to the local authority.

Why "until recently"? I am sure that you can imagine the shock, Madam Speaker, which went through the system when almost the first guidance issued by the Department of Health under the new community care legislation was to warn local authorities that by allowing such arrangements they were breaking the law. The National Assistance Act 1948, echoed in the national health service Acts of 1968 and 1977, makes it illegal for local authorities to make cash payments to individuals, and the Government have no choice but to remove from some of the most disadvantaged people in Britain the one freedom which they most treasure. That is the problem which the Bill seeks to address.

As you would undoubtedly be quick to remind me, Madam Speaker, a ten-minute Bill may not stray into territory such as giving local authorities the power to make direct payments, ideal though in my judgment it would be if they could. It is a severe limitation. I am proposing a device to improve the present position, but I know that it is very much a second best.

The limitation is well shown by the case of Mr. A. His local authority allows him to employ staff and manage them on a day-to-day basis, but the authority pays them and they are subject to the employment practices of the authority. The effect of its shift systems, for example, is that he cannot choose when he will go to bed. Nor can he suddenly alter the arrangements to fit in with an unexpected change in his schedule.

What a contrast with the case of Mr. F. He receives about £15,000 a year. It is paid into a separate bank

account and out of it he meets all the payments for his personal assistance. The account is open to the local authority to inspect at any time and at the end of each year Mr. F presents an audit of his account to the local authority. It is a simple system that is cheap to administer. It retains the statutory responsibility of the local authority and makes it easy for the authority to assume direct control if Mr. F, for whatever reason, found that managing his affairs in this way was too much for him, but affords him the dignity and independence that we would all seek for ourselves.

My proposition is, by contrast, inferior but is all that I can propose in the context of a ten-minute Bill. I propose that such disabled people as are assessed as able and willing to shoulder the responsibility of recruiting and employing their own staff should be allowed to do so up to the financial limit decreed by the local authority. They should then arrange to have the bills paid by the local authority, but the responsibility for the staff contracts would be theirs.

We have a parallel in the House. The office costs allowance is available to Members to make such arrangements as seem best to them to meet their needs and those of their constituents. The bills are handled by the Fees Office, which exercises some scrutiny over the payments to ensure that they do not depart from the rules that have been laid down. In this way we are in charge of our own offices, but the interests of the taxpayer are safeguarded. For the few clients that I envisage it is an unnecessarily cumbersome system, but is better than the position that we are left in by the recent guidance from the Department.

The Bill is modest, but the principle that it enshrines is fundamental to community care. Community care is partly about enhancing the dignity of those who need public care. It is also about enhancing choice, developing personal responsibility and encouraging the growth of personal capacity. It must, therefore, be right to allow those disabled people who have the capacity and the desire to take control of the most personal part of their care arrangements to do so.

When the National Assistance Act reached the statute book 44 years ago, the relationship between those who needed care and those who gave it was very different from what it is now. I know that Ministers know that. Nobody who listened to Ministers, hour after hour, in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill Standing Committee has any doubt about where their hearts lie. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), who is on the Treasury Bench today, shares their views.

My Bill aims to take the first step towards enabling disabled persons to cut off the shackles imposed upon them by long-dead Acts of Parliament and to restore to some severely disabled persons the dignity of making their own decisions in an area of their lives where no public authority, no matter how benevolent, can hope to treat them as well as they can treat themselves.

I hope that the Government, who have done so much already to increase the control that disabled people have over their own lives and who have introduced the citizens charter to carry that work forward, will give my Bill a fair wind or, even better, go the whole way and allow direct payments in carefully selected cases. When I worked on the Social Work (Scotland) Bill 25 years ago, we wrote into it section 12, which allows cash payments in special circumstances to be made by local authorities to people in their care. I feel that that is a better precedent in 1992 than the National Assistance Act of 1948.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Tom Clarke, Sir John Hannam, Ms. Liz Lynne, Rev. Martin Smyth and Mr. Dafydd Wigley.

### Disabled Persons (Services) Bill

Mr. Andrew Rowe accordingly presented a Bill to empower local authorities to make certain severely disabled persons accountable for expenditure on their care plans: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 44.]

# Local Government Finance

3.57 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire):** I beg to move,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 4) (House of Commons paper No. 61), which was laid before this House on 17 June, be approved.

**Madam Speaker:** I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House to debate at the same time the second motion on the Order Paper:

That the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 80), which was laid before this House on 19 June, be approved.

**Mr. Squire:** I think that I should be marginally exaggerating if I suggested that the country, or the majority of Members of Parliament, were on the edges of their seats because of the nature of what I am about to say on these reports, despite the fact that their provisions will affect nearly every household in England and Wales and despite also the fact that the sums involved are substantial.

The purpose of the two reports is to provide grant support to billing authorities in England and Wales towards revenue expenditure incurred in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 on preparation for the council tax. The grant underlines our firm commitment to helping authorities with the smooth implementation of the new tax and to ensuring that they are ready to issue the first bills by 1 April 1993.

For the convenience of the House, it might be helpful if I outlined briefly the advantages of the council tax, which is the subject of the preparations that we are considering. We believe that the council tax is fair and straightforward. It introduces a system of finance which will bring stability to local government.

The new tax is fair. It recognises that no household should have to pay an excessive amount towards the provision of local services. It makes provision for single adult households, and it is only right that they should pay less than households with two or more adults. It ensures that people on low incomes and vulnerable groups are helped through generous rebates of up to 100 per cent. of their liability. Owners of property that is no one's main residence will have to pay only 50 per cent. of the tax for the area.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): In preparing the legislation and the rules that will enable a 25 per cent. reduction to be given to single-person households, will the Minister bear in mind the possibility of applying those rules to give a similar reduction for water charges which could be based on the same register?

**Mr. Squire:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's question, but I suspect that he is trying to lead me into matters that are rather wider than the reports. However, his question has been heard and I am sure that it will be noted by those who are considering such matters.

The council tax is straightforward. We firmly believe that it will be easier to administer than the community charge, and it will be more easily understood by the public. There will be approximately half the number of bills. Many people who are now liable for the community charge will have their liability removed under the council tax. The new bills will be based on properties, and collection difficulties should therefore be minimised.

The council tax also has the considerable advantage for local authorities of not requiring them to compile and maintain a register of those who are liable to pay—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) expresses doubt from a sedentary position, but I am sure that he will develop his ideas later.

Most households will receive and pay a standard bill. The local authority does not need to concern itself with the number or status of adults in each household. All it will need to know is the name of the liable person, and we have given authorities sufficient powers to ensure that they gain that information.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East) *rose*—

**Mr. Squire:** May I make a little more progress and then I shall willingly give way.

There is abundant evidence of market prices for most property types, and capital values are easily understood by most people. The council tax builds on those advantages and adds to them the benefits of a banded system. Banding will ensure that an excessive burden does not fall on a minority of properties, as happened under domestic rates. Banding also reduces the administrative task involved in maintaining a local finance system by obviating the need for precise valuations. With no attempt at such precision, the likelihood of disputes and appeals is greatly reduced. Capital values are related to ability to pay, but we recognise that it is not a perfect match which is why there is a 3:1 ratio between bills of properties in the highest and lowest bands.

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): What are the Government doing to speed up the extensive delays in outstanding appeals? When the new council tax is introduced, I envisage a string of appeals to local appeals tribunals and the delays will be substantial. What will the Government do to reduce the number of appeals?

**Mr. Squire:** I do not necessarily accept the premise behind the hon. Gentleman's question about the number of appeals, but, as he knows, the independent body that runs the tribunals is aware of its responsibilities. The Government have recently stressed that we wish appeals to be settled as quickly as possible. The most recent figures that I have seen show that there has been a pick-up in the number of appeals being resolved.

The discount system is straightforward. Authorities will have a duty to try to establish the discount entitlement of each household in their area, but if that information is not forthcoming, authorities will be able to assume that the household is subject to a standard bill and it will then be up to the household to claim a discount and to supply the local authority with the necessary information to verify that claim.

The council tax will provide stability for local authorities. The tax base will remain fairly constant from year to year. The number of dwellings in any area is not usually subject to significant change. As the House knows, movements of people are far more volatile and they will not have such a great effect as under the community charge.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Should not the Minister be a little more hesitant in praising the virtues of

the council tax? He will remember that when the poll tax was introduced he was a Back Bencher and, indeed, a critic. The Ministers who introduced the poll tax told us that it was excellent and that Labour was exaggerating the problems. We were told that it would work well, but we all know what happened.—it destroyed Mrs. Thatcher. Would not it be wise for the Minister, who was one of the few long-standing critics of the poll tax on the Tory Back Benches, to be more hesitant about the council tax's virtues and to bear in mind some of the criticisms that will be heard from the Labour Back Benches—and certainly from our Front Bench—about some of the defects of the new tax?

**Mr. Squire:** I shall take the hon. Gentleman's words of warning to heart—although I must add that a detailed study of the comments on local government finance of every hon. Member on both sides of the House over the past 10 years would prove an indigestible meal for anyone who chose to confront it.

I shall now deal with the preparations and the grants before us. My Department commissioned an independent firm of consultants—CSL Group Ltd.—to estimate the additional costs to local authorities of preparing for the council tax. It estimated that local authorities would need to spend £165·3 million in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Dr. Lynne Jones** (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will the Minister assure us that clarification will soon be issued on the treatment of the software costs of implementation of the council tax? I understand that CSL assumed that software costs could be capitalised, which would not be in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Local authorities urgently need clarification.

**Mr. Squire:** I shall try to cover that issue in my speech, but if I do not do so, I trust that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who is to reply, will be able to supply the detailed answer that the hon. Lady seeks.

CSL estimates that, out of the sum that I have mentioned, English authorities would need to spend £156·1 million to introduce the new tax. That amount is divided between £114·6 million for revenue and £41·5 million for capital. CSL estimates that Welsh authorities would need to spend £9·2 million—almost £8 million in revenue expenditure and £1·24 million in capital expenditure. The Government have accepted the consultants' recommendations in full.

The special grant report authorises a grant of £85·97 million to English authorities to cover 75 per cent. of authorities' revenue costs. That amount is outside the total aggregate external finance set for local authorities in 1992-93. The grant is to be distributed on the basis of the number of domestic properties in each area, with an allowance for higher costs in the London area. The Welsh report authorises a grant of £5·985 million.

The number of dwellings used for that purpose is based on information supplied to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales, which has been validated with local authorities. Annex A of the English report and appendix 2 to the Welsh report detail the amount to be made available to each authority.

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Squire:** I am giving way rather a lot, but I shall still give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

**Mr. Carlisle:** Will the Minister confirm that the grant will cover 75 per cent. of the revenue costs of the change and none of the capital costs, which may involve, for example, computer software? Bearing in mind the fact that, even viewed in the most charitable possible light, the poll tax was a Government mistake, why do the Minister and his Welsh counterpart think that local authorities, which have already been severely punished by the wasted costs of the poll tax, should now have to pay any part of the revenue or capital costs of the change?

**Mr. Squire:** I shall clarify the position. The Government will make available supplementary credit approvals to cover the full cost of the capital expenditure. The hon. Gentleman will have heard what I have just said, but I am not yet sure whether that fully answered the question asked by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones). I shall return to the subject later.

The remaining 25 per cent of the revenue funds needed by authorities for council tax implementation will be supported through revenue support grant. If the House approves the report, a payment of 66 per cent. of an authority's grant will be paid on account on 1 November 1992 to authorities in England. Welsh authorities will receive 90 per cent. of grant in 1992-93 through three equal instalments in June 1992, November 1992 and March 1993. The remaining grant payable in 1993-94 in England and Wales is conditional on submission of a claim form by the authority. The CSL report identified a preference among Welsh authorities to fund computer-related costs from revenue sources. That has been taken into account in the Welsh payment arrangements.

The amount to be paid to each authority in respect of preparation costs cannot exceed the amount that the authority has spent on preparation. As a result, it is possible—if a little unlikely—that an authority will be entitled to receive less than the amount shown in the table at annex A and appendix 2 of the reports.

For the purposes of the reports, revenue expenditure is defined as expenditure which a billing authority incurs or has incurred in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93 solely for the purposes of preparation for the council tax, and which is not expenditure for capital purposes within the meaning of part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

My Department will be issuing authorities with supplementary credit approvals totalling some £41 million to cover the cost of capital works. That answers the point raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). The SCAs are not subject to a special grant report. They will be issued after 31 March 1993, on the basis of claims submitted by an authority and certified in the same way as the revenue claim form. It may be possible to issue higher SCAs to authorities spending above their allocations if claims from other authorities show spending below allocation. We shall consider the basis for doing that if it becomes clear that overall there is a significant underspend of the total allocation of £41·5 million. The SCAs for Welsh authorities in respect of capital expenditure were issued on 10 March this year.

Both my Department and the Welsh Office have liaised closely with the local authority associations about the level of grant and its method of distribution. The associations

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recognise the advantage of a formulaic basis for payment, as it will ensure speedy payment of the grant and, therefore, assist local authorities with their cash flow. I hope that the House will agree that the level of the grant is generous, and a very fair contribution to the necessary costs that local authorities will face in introducing the new tax.

The grants that we are considering are but one aspect—albeit a most important one—of the council tax implementation programme that we have in hand. Once the Local Government Finance Act 1992 received Royal Assent, we moved swiftly to make 10 key sets of regulations to let authorities know as quickly as possible the statutory framework within which they would be operating. Last week my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security laid the council tax benefit regulations before the House, and we shall be presenting regulations governing the scope of the council tax transitional relief scheme very shortly. Meanwhile, both Departments are undertaking a comprehensive programme to disseminate information. The aim is to ensure that authorities know how the new system is structured, that they are kept abreast of developments and that they have all the necessary information to ensure a smooth implementation.

At an early stage—last November—both Departments issued all authorities with good practice guidelines and a model implementation plan. These offered authorities advice on the initial stages of setting up project teams and defining implementation targets, and were based on work by CSL. We subsequently asked CSL to do some follow-up work to assess community charge backlogs, and to offer advice on action that authorities might take to reduce them. The study, which is under way, has the support of the local authority associations, and is designed both to help authorities with their community charge work and to free resources for council tax implementation.

Our Departments have also sponsored a detailed council tax computer system specification produced by the local authority systems alliance. It offers advice on all identified user requirements and addresses the varied application needs of authorities for in-house computer development, software house systems and package evaluation. A copy was sent to all authorities, and will be updated as necessary.

With the local authority associations in England and Wales, we are preparing a series of practice notes offering advice on all practical aspects of the new tax. We have already issued three such notes to all local authorities—on valuation lists, liability, discounts and exemptions, and recovery and enforcement. We will issue remaining notes as quickly as possible. We shall produce additional practice notes as the need arises and supplement the existing ones to ensure that they remain of value to local authorities.

In addition to that written advice, my officials have embarked on a series of implementation monitoring visits to local authorities. We have selected more than 30 authorities which represent a broad cross-section of all authority types and locations. The object of the visits is to learn at first hand the practical issues that authorities face. We shall offer help where possible and, perhaps more important, gather information that we can use centrally to guide us in framing any necessary amendments to the regulations and also to identify subject areas on which additional general advice may be desirable.

That two-way exchange of information is not an isolated exercise. We plan to visit the authorities on a number of occasions over the coming months so that both my Department and the authorities can keep up to date with the current state of play.

Officials from both Departments have also embarked on a series of talks to local authority practitioners at seminars held by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Institute of Rating, Revenues and Valuation and the local authority associations. They were booked for some 30 seminars throughout England and Wales, and I gather that more than half of these have already taken place. The aim is to offer an overview of the tax and answer any detailed points raised. More seminar dates will be added as the occasion arises and, as with the monitoring visits, we intend to ensure that that level of commitment is maintained for as long as local authorities feel it is necessary.

The House may also like to know that officials are liaising with such bodies as the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the National Consumer Council, and are keeping the computer suppliers closely in touch with developments.

I hope that the House will agree that all this shows our determination to co-operate closely with local government in the implementation of the new tax. The special grant reports are an important and tangible demonstration of our commitment to ensuring that local authorities have the necessary tools with which to do the job, and I commend them to the House.

4.16 pm

**Mr. David Blunkett** (Sheffield, Brightside): I welcome the fact that the reports are before us today, albeit somewhat belatedly. Having issued them on 4 June under the wrong legislative power—the Local Government Act 1988 instead of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989—the Government had to withdraw and reissue them. We should all say a prayer for the Department's competence in finally managing to find the right legislation under which to issue the reports.

The way in which the council tax saga is unfolding, and the tardiness with which it is being handled, is very reminiscent of the poll tax shambles. I feel like saying, "Here we go again: another tax; another shambles in the making; another last-minute confirmation of information that is essential if local government is to do its job; and another chance for local government to bail out central Government by achieving the impossible within time limits which border on the ridiculous and which make it likely that, if things go wrong, local government will get the blame for the confusion, uncertainty and unpreparedness of the Government."

The truth is that, when the Government pushed the legislation through, they never really expected to have to implement this wretched tax. That is self-evident, and the Under-Secretary knows it.

**Mr. Squire:** Perhaps the fairest immediate response is to say that if, indeed, we are surprised—and I promise the hon. Gentleman that we are not—our surprise is as

nothing compared with the relief that the Opposition must feel at not having to introduce a tax requiring four separate annual valuations.

**Mr. Blunkett:** As we never proposed a tax with four separate annual valuations, we do not have to feel relief at not having to implement it. If there was a bright spot on my horizon on 10 April, it was that I would not have to sort out the shambles that you created—the aftermath of the poll tax—or deal with the alterations that a Labour Government would have made to the council tax. We would not have implemented the tax in this form. We would not have used the way that you have chosen to restore a property tax——

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I apologise, Madam Speaker. I still feel that I am on the hustings. My problem is knowing which hustings I am now on. For this afternoon's purposes, may I say that the Government did not believe that they would have to implement the council tax. We knew that, when in power, we would have to alter it to make it workable.

The Minister, rightly from his point of view, eulogised this afternoon about the reintroduction of a property tax. He was right to do that, because such a tax is simple, potentially much fairer than the poll tax, and can be made to work more cheaply. The problem is that the tax, the orders for funding the introduction of that tax and the necessary administration and computer arrangements, will be more costly than Labour's alternative and they are much more confusing in terms of implementation.

Part of the problem is that the council tax is expected to bear such a heavy load in terms of the failure to decentralise the business rate. With only 15 per cent. in England and a much lower percentage in Wales having to be picked up by a local tax of that kind, it is clear that the way in which it has to be implemented and its eventual outcome will be much more problematic. One need only read the leader in *The Times* today to understand the difficulty.

With such a tax, the powers and functions of local government must be reduced to accord with the ability of those authorities to sustain services instead of having a tax designed to sustain a range of services required by local people.

**Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** (Amber Valley): With regard to services, did the hon. Gentleman listen to the programme on BBC 2 last night about a town hall and hear the chief education officer of Labour-controlled Lewisham council in London bemoaning the fact that the council had so organised its school transport contracts that the council's National Union of Public Employees friends and the direct labour organisation could charge whatever they liked? There was no chance of a reduction even if the use of those services decreased. As a result of those ludicrous contracts, teachers' jobs had to be cut. Is the hon. Gentleman proud of those priorities and the efficiency of that flagship London Labour council?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I seem to recall that the PA Consulting Group, which investigated the operation of compulsory competitive tendering in the light of the Government's desire to extend CCT, recommended that community and school transport should be exempted on the ground that it was cheaper for the authority to organise its overall services to integrate the provision of school transport with its central transport operations and that it cost as much money to put the services out to tender as it did to operate those services. I am happy to refute the allegations of the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim).

I have been diverted from the interesting leader article in *The Times*. The article referred to a speech made by the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities yesterday to the Association of County Councils about the future. Obviously the future of local government is dependent on and bound up with the ability of local government to raise tax and spend money. The article stated:

"For good measure, Mr. Redwood listed some of the activities that a modern Tory minister nowadays associates with subsidiary government in Britain. A county might see its identity reflected in an agricultural show, a cricket team and a lord lieutenant; a town might find expression in a football team, an arts festival and a mayor. Small wonder that councils are frantically campaigning against what they see as another assault on their surviving functions."

There could be any old tax if the functions of an authority were reduced to the point where a council meeting could be held in a telephone box with a taxi or Lewisham's school transport waiting outside to take people away. It is nonsense—we all know that it is—that a tax should not be able to bear the functions and activities which give local people an opportunity to express themselves at the ballot box and to get the services that they want.

Having had the poll tax, one unholy mess, perpetrated upon us, we now have the council tax. The reports offer 75 per cent. of expenditure, as the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has spelt out—that is, 75 per cent. of CSL's estimate on revenue and the £41 million for England in terms of capital allowances.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) asked whether the software provision that is absolutely vital in implementing the new proposals could be capitalised to ensure that they did not fall as a revenue charge which would divert from other administrative costs. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales will be able to assure us that such costs can be counted for capital purposes to ensure that further damage is not done to services by having to find revenue from elsewhere, because those things matter greatly and authorities are having to do the planning and the work now. They cannot do them after April next year. They cannot simply put off the evil day or perhaps decide that they will find the expenditure from somewhere else, because they have to do so now. We will deal with capping orders which illustrate the delicate position in which authorities find themselves. Even an extra £3 a head on a poll tax bill has to be denied a tiny district authority in the interests of centralised government and new forms of autocracy.

It would be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment and his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales could answer a few questions about exactly what we will have to face in the months ahead so that local government can take account of the problems and begin to plan to overcome them.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment suggested that it was not necessary to have a register to be able to operate the council tax; therefore, expenditure did not have to be found—that was the inference—to provide and maintain that register. It is only a week or two since the Government admitted that they will use the poll tax register for the coming year to assess the likely take-up of

*[Mr. Blunkett]*

discounts and the way in which an authority would have to calculate the amount levied on the new valuation system to reach a base level for funding the authority in the year ahead.

Those are serious matters. If the poll tax register, with all its faults and failings, is to be used for that purpose, why not accept that there should be a maintained register over the years ahead? Why not accept that funding should be made available to sustain such a sensible register?

The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said that there would be a standard council tax charge and that people would apply for their discounts once they knew what their bills would be. A bill will drop through the door, and the family or person living in the house will have to make an application. But that is a fat lot of use to the authority that is planning for how many people it will have to assess as living alone. It is a fat lot of use in determining exactly how grant, business rate and local council tax revenues are to be balanced to ensure that authorities can balance the books in the financial year ahead. It is a fat lot of use, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a women's takeover. It is necessary to have that information in order to assess levy and the likely problems that will be experienced in dealing with council tax capping and the like.

Some serious issues arise out of the dismissal of a register in terms of the operation of the discount system. I should be grateful if the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment the Under-Secretary of State for Wales would tell us where the cash will come from to compensate for that.

We estimated that £780 million would be necessary to fund the discounts to people living alone. I assume that part of that will be trawled back from the reduction in the amounts claimed in benefits. We were not assured in Committee about that. I referred earlier to why we did not believe that the Government would implement the council tax. They had so few answers to reasonable questions about how the tax would be implemented.

One of our questions was how much it would cost the nation as a whole, or how much would have to be found by local taxpayers, to top up the amount lost by giving discounts to the wealthy who happened to claim that they lived alone. Once such claims are made, it is necessary to check them to ensure that the system works and is properly monitored. Then we are into the business of the register.

We are not sure how the valuation system is working out. We had a bland assurance this afternoon which the civil service had written into the Under-Secretary's speech that all was well on the valuation front. That is not the information or the signals that many of us have received about what is happening on the ground.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is one of the world's experts on valuation appeals. In the Committee which considered the poll tax legislation, he enlightened us about the number of outstanding appeals against the former rates and business rates valuations. The figure was 43,000 in West Yorkshire alone. That was only a few months ago. My hon. Friend will confirm, I am sure, by tapping my left leg that I have got it right.

We now face a valuation system that will not be completed until the end of the year. Information will not be given to authorities and individuals until the beginning of 1993. People will be expected to lodge appeals. You were not in the Chamber to hear it, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the Under-Secretary said that everything would be all right because, to paraphrase, the valuations would be so vague and inaccurate that no one would be able to appeal against them. That is what he said in effect. I thought that that was an interesting give-away.

If we had been able to operate a new property tax, the Labour party would have introduced definite valuations which took account of the real sale price of the house, adjusted by sensible measures. People would have the right to appeal because they would know exactly how their house compared with the neighbour's house or that of the person down the street who lived in slightly different circumstances. But, of course, no one will know that under the council tax valuation.

We can make a pretty good guess about what the valuation may be if a person does not have an extension on the back of the house, does not have a particularly enjoyable vista from the kitchen window or has a gasworks or fish and chip shop next door. I used to use the example of a fish and chip shop until the Secretary of State thought that I was referring to fish and chip shop owners and threatened me with an army of them parading outside the Palace of Westminster. So I shall stick to gasworks from now on.

Who wants a gasworks next door if the house is valued the same as the one that adjoins the local park? Of course, no one does. But presumably the Government believe that they will get away with it if the valuation is sufficiently vague to avoid a successful appeal. It all adds up to a shambles. As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton reminds me, we had hot air balloons and helicopters passing overhead to take aerial photographs to make sure that people had told the truth about the size of their house and whether they had an extension.

Above all, the grant should ensure that local authorities can do the job well in advance. It is regrettable that a dozen key orders for the preparation and implementation of the council tax are still outstanding. We are only a few months away from D-day—or M-day, because it is a Michael tax rather than a David tax, in every sense of the word.

It is tragic that local government is expected to put the council tax together with so little information at such a late date. We do not know what provisions might be made for the standard spending assessments. We pray and hope that the Government will make some revisions so that authorities have some sense in their expenditure.

We hope for some clarification of the equalisation formula for the new grant structure after the reintroduction of a property tax. We know that at least the Under-Secretary of State understands the problems of equalisation. It was clear that other Ministers did not have a clue what we were talking about when we mentioned it in Committee and elsewhere.

A host of problems face us, and also a belated order before the summer recess, to assure local authorities that there will be some resources to help them to do the job. We should thank local authorities for the way that they are facing up to this further enormous change. We should applaud them for the way that they have tackled what they know to be another flawed tax. Once again we should

accord local government the gratitude that it is so often denied by Conservative Members—gratitude for managing the impossible.

That is what we should be doing. Instead we are reading out briefs to tell local government that it will get 75 per cent. of the cost and that perhaps, under the other services element of the revenue support grant, it might get an unspecified extra 25 per cent. if it is not clawed back by the Treasury in negotiations with the Department of the Environment which amount to a battle to prevent the council tax from degenerating into the shambles that the poll tax was. We know that there is a battle and we know that the Government should spend hundreds of millions of pounds to introduce the tax rather than try to do it on the cheap.

We have no idea what the reduction scheme—the transitional help to protect people on transfer from poll tax to council tax—will cost. Perhaps we could be enlightened about that.

Answers to all those questions would help local government to do its job more effectively and to avoid being blamed when it is the Government's fault for introducing the tax too late, too shambolically, and without the necessary forethought or information to make it work properly.

4.36 pm

**Mr. Eric Pickles** (Brentwood and Ongar): Ever since I became involved with local government, each time that we have embarked on some new strategy or act, people have said that it was the end of local government as we knew it, and that if we did not get the legislation right, it would all be over. It is true that the credibility of both the Government and local government is on the line with the council tax. Everyone across the political spectrum in local government has a vested interest in ensuring that the tax succeeds.

I have always had an optimistic view of local government and, to a small degree, I share the views of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). Local government seems to be able to change its functions and structures quickly, and to absorb new types of finance, which shows how adaptable it is.

Before we pass the grant, it is reasonable to ensure that the amendment is sufficient. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said, the Government commissioned an independent report and, pleasingly and unusually, accepted its recommendations in full.

Two authorities make up the constituency of Brentwood and Ongar: Brentwood receives £131,000 in grant and Epping Forest receives £223,000. Opposition Members should realise that, on the whole, authorities are satisfied with their grants. Even the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has said that its members are largely happy with the size of the grant. That association is Labour controlled and, although I hold it in the highest regard, it is not renowned as an organisation which regards Government initiatives with any enthusiasm. Although it is not dancing in the aisles, it is satisfied with the sum that is available. It has reservations about whether the grant should be open ended, and I shall consider those later. The grant is intended to cover the sum of money expended.

The valuation process appears to have run smoothly. I do not know what signals Labour Members have been receiving, but it is a remarkable achievement to value 21 million properties by, roughly, the end of this month. It is remarkable that only 1 per cent. of firms performing those valuations were dismissed for repeated inaccuracies. I wish that that had been the case under the rating system, because, then, people would not have come to the House and spoken about the length of appeals. The Government appear to have done the job well.

I am also pleased to hear that the valuations of only 6·3 per cent. of properties were rejected as being inaccurate. That is the figure that we could have expected under the old rating system. I would not have regarded it as unusual if it had risen to 10 per cent. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Valuation Office is prepared to go on the record and state that the exercise has largely been performed satisfactorily.

The real test will come in December and January when the lists of valuations are displayed in town halls. A Labour Member suggested that many appeals might be lodged. It is pleasing to note that he is using slightly gentler language than that behind the ridiculous suggestion that the number of appeals would reach hundreds of thousands. Because of the small difference between the bands, I doubt whether many appeals will be lodged. I suspect that there will be more unhappiness about low valuations than about high ones. People will argue that their property is worth a lot more than the valuer suggests, but unless I am misjudging people's attitudes, I doubt very much whether people will appeal, saying, "Excuse me, but I am in a lower band and I would like to pay more council tax."

According to the spokesman for the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation—an independent organisation—the number of appeals is likely to be minimal. I am sure that that will be the case.

**Mr. William O'Brien:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Pickles:** I am extremely flattered, and I am delighted to do so.

**Mr. O'Brien:** We should pursue that point. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will outline what will happen to the disabled person, who has been assured that he will be put into a lower band, if he is already in the lowest band? Will the hon. Gentleman explain what concession will be given to disabled people who are already in the lowest band?

**Mr. Pickles:** It is clear from the legislation that for those in the lowest band, particularly the disabled, the necessary adaptations that go to make up the valuation —*[Interruption.]* I hope that hon. Gentlemen will allow me to answer the point. The substantive point is that adaptations to property, which enable a disabled person to live comfortably and reasonably in a house, are exempt from the valuation. There is no suggestion that higher valuations will be made. Individual and personal exemptions are available, which is perfectly reasonable.

It is spurious to suggest that many appeals will be made.

**Mr. William O'Brien:** The hon. Gentleman's remarks are highly significant. He has introduced a new subject that we were not allowed to debate in Committee—disregards in the valuation of properties lived in by disabled people. If he is correct about that, I hope that that will be

*[Mr. William O'Brien]*

confirmed, because that point was not made in Committee. We should receive some assurances on the points made by the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Pickles:** I think that the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood what I was saying. I was referring to disabled people in the lowest band. If their properties are adapted, they may face the prospect of being placed in a higher band. My substantive point was that, because of the legislation, those adaptations that increase the value of the property will be ignored when the banding is determined.

Given the way in which the valuation exercise has proceeded and the general satisfaction of various authorities, it is not surprising that Mr. Olding, the director of finance for Brentwood district council, wrote to me:

"The introduction of the Council tax in Brentwood is proceeding smoothly and I am confident it will be a similar success story to our record on the Community Charge."

As the Under-Secretary suggested, the council tax will be much simpler to administer than the rates or the community charge. The most important factor about the new system is that it has been market tested and that it is based on valuations. People generally know the value of their home. The new system is not based on what a notional rent should be and, therefore, people will have a much clearer idea of whether they should appeal. The council tax is much easier to understand than the rates or the community charge. We need to make it clear that, because of the banding, the valuations will not be exact. As the director of the Institute of Valuers, Mr. Farrington, recently said, it is an

"indication of the relative values against other properties in the same area".

I am pleased that, through the council tax, local councils' ability to raise their own revenue will be retained. That is essential to local democracy. It retains the link between when local government chooses to spend and what residents are prepared to pay. The revenue raised locally relates roughly to the level of discretion. I notice that the hon. Member for Brightside has just left the Chamber, but in a previous organisation, to which we both belonged, I used to listen to his long and persuasive arguments that local government was raising too much money locally and that the balance had shifted. He argued that central Government would have to raise more. The Government have taken his arguments on board and have drastically cut the amount that is raised locally by doing exactly what the hon. Gentleman suggested. He now tells us that we are wrong.

The level of discretion in local councils is roughly between 13 and 15 per cent., so we will have the opportunity to get better and more accountable local government through the introduction of the council tax. If a council decides to exceed its SSA—and it may have good reasons for doing so—local residents will have to pay. I do not want to trespass on the debate that will follow, but residents have the right to be protected when their council runs out of control and spends excessively.

**Mr. Bill Olner** (Nuneaton): The hon. Gentleman cannot have it both ways. He has spoken about local accountability and local democracy, but it is the Government and their civil servants who set the capping levels that appertain to all local authorities. It is nonsense to say that local authorities can do what their constituents want. They cannot, because there is a central and overbearing burden put upon them by central Government capping. I have no argument with the disappearance of the poll tax—I do not think that any hon. Member has, including Conservative Members. We are all glad to see the back of it. It is nonsense, however, to talk about the retention of local accountability when capping will still be retained after the introduction of the council tax.

**Mr. Pickles:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that comment. However, one of the strengths of the British constitution is, essentially, its pragmatism. When dealing with many councils that are elected on a four-year or "third out" basis, the electorate should be able to give a clear message. They gave us a clear message in April and May this year. There must be safeguards to ensure that individuals are protected. There must not be low increases or even no increases just before elections and then massive increases in the years when the electorate has no opportunity to protest. If the Government stand for anything, they stand for the protection of the individual, and those capping powers are to protect individuals against the excessive abuse of the state.

With careful management and foresight, the grants should be sufficient. The majority of information technology applications should now be in place. However, I was alarmed at a recent survey by the Society of Information Technology Managers, whose bizarre acronym is SOCITM. I have been a recipient of its bills and the acronym may be a reference to its charges. It showed that, at the end of April, only 52 per cent. of councils had signed contracts for information technology. Half of those have gone to outside contractors. Many people blame the uncertainty of the period before the general election, but it is lackadaisical and unacceptable not to have those information technologies in place now.

That brings me back to the point made by the AMA: if the amount of money is not sufficient, should not the Government underwrite that sum? By not having their information technology in place, those councils have effectively cut down their options. All that they can do now is to take proprietary packages, which will be more expensive with regard to adaptation. There should be no open-ended commitment to underwrite all the costs. It is no use complaining that the money is insufficient if councils have not taken the necessary action to minimise damage.

The grant that generates that sum must be sufficient to ensure that those packages can take care of the review of local government, whether local authorities are sized up or sized down. Many charging authorities will have to change in nature. They may be joined by other authorities or disappear completely.

We must still deal with arrears in rates and poll tax payments. The no-pay culture that stalks local government and the Labour party has done considerable damage to local government.

**Mr. Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Pickles:** I fear that Opposition Members feel that I am spending a lot of time on my speech, but if they keep intervening I shall keep going.

**Mr. Tipping:** I am interested in the notion of a no-pay culture. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the research in Nottinghamshire that shows that Labour-controlled councils have a far better collection record than Conservative-controlled councils?

**Mr. Pickles:** I shall come to that matter in due course, because it is germane to the point.

I do not wish to use exaggerated language, but the Frankenstein monster of the no-pay culture, largely created by Labour councils, will haunt them for a long time. It will not be as easy for them to get rid of the monster as it was to allow their CND membership to lapse.

There should be a clear message that there will be no amnesty for defaulting poll tax payers and that those who use a service should be expected to pay. Either through inefficiency or encouragement, Labour-controlled authorities have failed to ensure that people pay their bills. My authority of Epping Forest has a collection rate of 95 per cent., and my authority of Brentwood has a collection rate of 102 per cent.—not because people there want to pay more but because the council has been prepared to ensure that people who have not paid do pay. People in Brentwood and Ongar do not all live on high incomes—plenty of people are on low incomes in my constituency—but they realise that paying the community charge is the law and people on low incomes are prepared to pay because they realise that if they do not, others will have to pay.

Compare that with the top 10 councils with the highest number of defaulters: Hackney with a collection rate of 52 per cent.; Newham with a collection rate of 58·6 per cent.; and Liverpool with a collection rate of 62·3 per cent. That is sheer incompetence.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has been wittering on about matters that have nothing to do with the narrow reports that we are debating. He has now been on his feet since 4.36 pm. Will you return him to order now?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** I allow a certain latitude in discussion of these matters, but the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) should clearly relate the point that he is now making to the reports under discussion.

**Mr. Pickles:** Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. The specific point relating to the reports is the use of the sums of money determined by them. That money must deal, essentially, with three things: first, poll tax defaulters; secondly, rates defaulters; and, thirdly, the introduction of the council tax. But no sensible council should try to use that money in that way. They should abandon rates arrears altogether and regard them as miscellaneous debt, thus making considerable sums available for information technology. They should now put out to competitive tender the collection of community charge non-payments, allowing revenue staff to work exclusively on the introduction of the council tax. The licensing of software could then be shared by those who contract out and space could be rented in software houses. That is a much more sensible way to proceed. It is not an ideological point, but a pragmatic and sensible one.

We employed extra staff for the introduction of the community charge, and those people know that they are not needed and that they must therefore go. Rather than keeping a dispirited staff together, it makes much more sense and is a better use of public money to contract the work out.

I am pleased that we shall use the electoral register. Now that we are adopting a system in which the applicant must prove, we should not be blind to other information available. The community charge register already exists. Just because we shall no longer apply that charge, it does not mean that we should not use the register for it. Why not use the electoral register, which exists as a method of proof? There is no need for a separate council tax register, and arguments for one are spurious.

In conclusion—[HON. MEMBERS: "At last."] Those hon. Members who wish to make speeches should not have interrupted me. The sums of money offered are reasonable, and local income tax will come out stronger from that process.

4.59 pm

**Mr. Alex Carlile** (Montgomery): I shall depart from the line adopted by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) and concentrate on the issue underlying the provisions. In most fairy tales or cautionary tales, goodness and morality win in the end; but this is a bit like a bad fairy tale, where badness and amorality win. It is as if a wicked witch in a lair on a central London street had mixed a magic potion called the poll tax and told everyone that they had to use it. Later, when it was realised that it was a thoroughly bad thing, along came a fairy godmother called Michael, his long, blond hair a-sparkle with magic charms, with a solution called the council tax. In the real fairy tale, goodness and morality would win to the extent that those who were good and deserved to have justice on their side would receive it free.

However, in the case of the council tax, the Government handed over the transfer process to a perfectly competent firm of consultants for whom they wrote a brief. The consultants drew up a report with recommendations that the Government accepted in full—I recognise that. But the bottom line is that up to 25 per cent. of the revenue cost of switching from the poll tax to the council tax may have to be borne by the local taxpayers in each district of England and Wales.

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I was astonished to hear the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) say that there was overall satisfaction with the level of grant available. That is complete and utter nonsense. I have spoken to treasurers in both the districts in my constituency. In one case it is estimated that a sheer moiety of the grant will be payable—it will be 50 per cent. short. In the other case, the amount is about 45 per cent. Therefore, how the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar could make that assertion is beyond my comprehension. In any event, the mistake is central Government's and they should sort it out and fund their solution properly.

**Mr. Carlile:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) who, unlike the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar, has stayed, fought and won in his community, where he is closely in touch with the views of both councillors and local government officers and has been for the past 20 or so years. He underlines my point that, in every district council area throughout England and Wales, residents in the local

*[Mr. Carlile]*

community will have to find money from their own pockets to meet the shortfall. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State shakes his head, but the Government have not undertaken to meet the revenue cost in full. If he wants to deny that, I shall give way with pleasure.

**Mr. Squire:** I was endeavouring not to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman's flow, but over and above today's report, the Government have undertaken to contribute substantial funds to the revenue support grant. The matter is not quite as black and white as the hon. and learned Gentleman makes out.

**Mr. Carlile:** The Minister has, by implication, confirmed what I said earlier. I chose my words carefully and said that the consequence of the policy was that up to 25 per cent. of the revenue costs of the change may have to be met by local taxpayers. Nothing that the Minister has said so far would change that—and I suspect that nothing that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales says later will do so either.

**Mr. David Congdon** (Croydon, North-East): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Carlile:** No, I shall not give way as many other hon. Members want to speak.

The Government introduced the poll tax, which was nearly a complete political disaster for them and which has been accepted as being a mistake in tax terms. However, they have not done the decent thing and said that they will meet in full the cost of putting right their mistake.

In rural districts such as the constituency that I represent, Montgomery, and those of the hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), even a shortfall of a few thousand pounds will have tangible effects on the local community. For example, it may mean that small businesses will have to pay more for refuse collection and council houses will be maintained less efficiently than before.

I am sure that I speak for almost all my constituents when I say that I see no justice in me or any other taxpayer in Montgomeryshire having to pay a penny piece to put right a horrible mistake by the Government. I certainly regard it as outrageous that there should be a reduction in local services as a consequence of that mistake.

The matter extends further than the simple question of how to meet the cost of introducing the council tax. The poll tax will continue to haunt local councils while they attempt to collect unpaid poll tax. As I understand it, the orders make no allowance for the continuing cost of trying to collect the unpaid sums—a process that could continue for a long time. It has already wasted a tremendous amount of court time and money, and in some districts only a small amount of tax has been collected.

I hope that the Government will feel that, as they are not providing either a grant or an interest-free loan for the collection of outstanding poll tax, they will eventually say, "Enough is enough—we should stop our futile task of trying to collect the poll tax, which is now a residual sum that can never be collected." That time may well not yet have come, but I hope that the Government keep the matter under constant review. When the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales replies, will he repudiate the suggestion that I believe was made by the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar that the last drop of poll tax should be collected, no matter how much it may cost local authorities to do so.

The figures set out in the orders seem to show anomalies between local authorities. For example, Richmond upon Thames has 64,400 households and a population of 167,200, and receives £340,000 grant; Kensington and Chelsea has 7,000 fewer households, 36,000 fewer people, and receives £61,000 more in grant. Bearing in mind that the grant structure for the whole country is supposed to be based on inner London figures, such anomalies are causing concern among local authorities and I make a genuine plea for information on how such anomalies have arisen.

Above all, however, England and Wales people are waiting with me for the Government to tell us why they should pay anything for the Government's mistakes.

5.10 pm

**Mrs. Angela Knight** (Erewash): My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) said that he was sure that all parties wanted the introduction of the council tax, and for that tax to succeed. Judging from the contributions that I have heard from Opposition Members, I wonder whether they truly want the council tax to succeed.

The grants that we are being asked to discuss and agree today are to be used for the implementation of the council tax. In the few weeks that I have been a Member of Parliament I have learnt that if people are really concerned about an issue the first thing they do is to write to their Member of Parliament. I have received no letters from constituents about the introduction of the council tax and I have had no representations from my local authority. Most of the local authorities appear to be satisfied with the amount that we are being asked to grant to them. I trust that the £184,000 for Erewash will be used properly for the purpose for which it is intended.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has left the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman said that local authority finance was a shambles. I spent five years as a member of Sheffield city council when the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) were its leaders. If I had to attribute the word shambles to anything I would use it in connection with the way that that council was run, then and now.

There is a sad inevitability about the way that Labour councils are run, as those of us who have lived or still live in areas run by them are well aware. I had that experience not only as a member of Sheffield city council but as a resident in the area run by Derbyshire county council, which is notorious for the way in which it governs the area. Opposition Members mocked the Minister who said that counties should not just be known only by a cricket team. Derbyshire cricket team does the county far more credit than its council.

A recent article in *Tribune*, commenting on the local council elections, stated that several of the councils in which Labour fared worst did not deserve to do any better simply on the basis of Labour's dire record in office. I have seen the truth of that statement at first hand. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Brightside has returned to his place.

**Mr. Blunkett:** The hon. Lady and I have crossed swords in the distant past. She speaks about competence. What did the Audit Commission say in 1985 about the running of Sheffield city council when I was its leader? Will she confirm that the chairman of the Audit Commission at the time, who is now taking over the Local Government Commission, said that Sheffield was a shining example and the most efficient council in Britain? Will she also confirm that for the first time in history Labour won the Broomhill ward in the Hallam constituency in July 1985 at the height of the conflict with central Government?

**Mrs. Knight:** The hon. Gentleman has since lost the Broomhill ward not just once but twice. Perhaps there was one occasion on which Sheffield did not do everything wrong. However, I urge him to look at the reports for successive years on Sheffield city council by the district auditor and the Audit Commission. The hon. Gentleman should submit his evidence to the current inquiry by the district auditor into the World student games and the overall running of the local authority. For such reasons I welcome the council tax.

I have heard much concern expressed about the alternatives proposed by other parties. Rates have been mentioned, but my constituents are loath to have any sort of return to the rates. Mention has been made of the business rate. The business communities in the midlands, the north and Sheffield are united in their opposition to a return to a system in which the rate is set by the local authority. If Opposition Members spoke to their chambers of commerce, they would find, as I have, that that is their view.

Accountability is surely fundamental to local government. There must be a direct link between the amount that people pay and the implementation of the policies for which they voted. That link is retained in the council tax. I welcome the fact that people have recently started to pay great attention to local government. The council tax will be most acceptable to my constituents, but there is still a need to ensure that bills are correct and fair and are seen to be reasonable. A system under which people will not examine so much how we pay for local government will enable them to pay more attention to what local government is doing and the services that it provides. There is great concern in Derbyshire about that. One of the worries relates to the funding of Derbyshire police force and the report——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but it is clear that her speech is straying wide of the subject of the debate. She must relate more closely to the order, which is fairly narrow.

**Mrs. Knight:** The order deals with the granting of public money to local authorities. We are asking those authorities to spend that money wisely and advisedly. I am addressing that and the concern of many of my constituents about the use of public money and the services that are provided.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Lady that the public money that we are discussing is for the introduction of the new tax.

**Mrs. Knight:** The council tax will lead to greater accountability because it will bring greater fairness, awareness and equity to local government finance. I am addressing those issues, which are surely important to all hon. Members. It is important for the grants to be made and for the council tax regime to be implemented so that equipment can be bought and wheels set in motion. The new tax must be introduced fairly and on time.

The fairness of local government finance is also a subject for debate. The unfairnesses in many local authorities such as mine are practised in what is called the name of the people. Those councils have not provided the services that people want. They have not funded the police in the way that people want. I understand that this is a narrow debate.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady again. I have no doubt that the matters that she is raising are important to her, but they do not fall within the scope of the debate.

**Mrs. Knight:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I applaud local government. I applaud many local councils for the efforts that they have made to ensure that services are delivered in the areas for which they are responsible. I applaud them for the efforts that they have continued to make during times of change, and we must change the ways in which local authorities are financed. Unfortunately, I cannot applaud all local authorities or councils, and some of the worst are those that are ruled by the Labour party.

5.20 pm

**Mr. George Howarth** (Knowsley, North): I shall try to keep my remarks strictly within the terms of the orders.

The two most recent speeches that we have heard from the Government Benches had a profoundly depressing ring about them. The hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), having failed to maintain control of Bradford city council for the Conservative party, decamped to another part of the country. He chooses now to use his seat in the House to berate local government in general and the part of it that would not continue to elect him in particular.

The same can be said of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight). Having failed on any occasion to take control of Sheffield city council, the hon. Lady decamped to Derbyshire. Having failed to listen to your strictures, Madam Deputy Speaker, she is now failing to follow the debate, but that is probably par for the course. It seems that she prefers to talk to her colleagues.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I think it unwise for one Member to talk about the conduct of another. There is some unbecoming conduct in the Chamber, and I refer to the amount of conversation that appears to be taking place among those on the Opposition Benches. I am anxious to hear what the hon. Member says.

**Mr. Howarth:** I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I wish to say specifically that, having failed ever to take control of Sheffield city council, the hon. Member for Erewash had to find a seat that could accommodate her in Derbyshire. From that safe warren the hon. Lady attacks the city council of which she used to be a member and of which she could never take control.

The hon. Members for Brentwood and Ongar and for Erewash, having been rejected by their local authorities,

*[Mr. Howarth]*

have come to the House to turn the full heat of their hatred back on the electorate. It seems that it is to be punished for not electing them at local authority level.

I wish to talk specifically about the application of the council tax in Knowsley, part of which I am proud to represent. The first issue that I intend to raise was covered in part by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), when he intervened in the Minister's speech. I am concerned about how the council tax will bear on those whose properties have been adapted because of their disabilities. I spoke to officials of Knowsley borough council this morning, who told me that they are desperately concerned about the way in which the system will operate. They feel that it will be difficult to ensure that adapted properties are subject to appropriate banding. It seems that the onus has been placed on local authorities to seek out disabled people. The officials to whom I spoke feel that that is not necessarily the best approach. More to the point, they feel that there is much scope for disabled people being overlooked. Another consideration is that if a property is already on the lowest band and then it is adapted, there is no further band to which it can drop. That discriminates against those who live in properties that fall within the lowest band. There is no scope there for any improvement.

My second complaint is that the discount system seems incredibly difficult to operate. The onus is on the local authority to identify who is and who is not a single-person occupier. It seems that the Department of the Environment takes the view that the benefit of the doubt rests with the council tax payer. That is the advice that is being received by local authorities through the Department. I understand, however, that a recent Audit Commission circular states that the onus is on the occupier to establish his or her status as a single occupier. It seems that the Audit Commission has made that clear in recent contacts with local authorities. There is an area of confusion which needs to be clarified.

If I thought that informative circulars and guidelines were to be issued within the next few days or weeks, that would be all right. Unfortunately, that seems not to be the position. I was told this morning by officials of Knowsley borough council that, apart from the relevant legislation, only three practice notes have been issued. The practitioners feel that there are huge grey areas and overlapping confusion that still has to be cleared up. A vast amount of additional information will have to be made available if the practitioners are to be able to sort out the proposed system in time for its implementation.

I went some of the way with the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) when he made his measured remarks about non-payment and the aftermath of it. I do not think that any of my hon. Friends ever advocated non-payment. It was—*[Interruption.]* We never did. There were a couple of Members who did so, and it may have escaped the notice of some Conservative Members that they are no longer Members. The two things may not be entirely unconnected. Apart from a minority, my colleagues in the Labour party—in the House and elsewhere—were careful not to advocate non-payment. The problem arose—the Government were warned about this—because of the uncollectable nature of the poll tax. My colleagues and I never advocated the non-payment culture, a term which Ministers seem intent on using.

The local authority in my constituency and other Labour authorities throughout the country have taken determined measures to recover the tax that has not been paid. There must come a point, however—I do not know whether we have arrived at it yet—when the law of diminishing returns starts to operate. Local authorities are expected to pump in resources to collect sums that may prove to be uncollectable. The cost to the local authorities may outweigh whatever it is able to recover. I am not saying that recovery should not be sought where a person who should have paid the tax is clearly identifiable. There should not be a general amnesty, but perhaps there should be a more intelligent approach. Perhaps there should be greater co-operation between central Government and local government to decide what is reasonable and what is not in determining whether those who should have paid poll tax and have not should be pursued, and for how much longer.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery raised a matter that should be given thoughtful consideration by the Government. I hope that I have made it clear that we should adopt a measured approach to the problem. I am not advocating any wild action.

The council tax is an improvement on the poll tax. It would be miraculous if even this Government could come up with anything less acceptable than the poll tax. However, despite all their claims, the council tax is still not the best solution for the financing of local government. The test should be whether the tax will be with us for at least a generation. I believe that a future Government of another persuasion, or the present Government, will have to return to local government finance legislation, possibly annually. Indeed, that seems to have happened over the past 13 years or so. The Government do not have the right formula and the tax does not reflect the necessary balances. There is a need for accountability and there is a need for central Government to be able to adjust the formula to compensate for the different levels of poverty, for example, that are to be found in different areas.

I regret the fact that these reports make no contribution towards a long-term consensus on financing local government. The Government know that that is so. The pity of it is that they have been unwilling to consider a long-term solution. Instead, they have tried to find a short-term solution that will dig them out of a hole. It does not, however, provide a solution to the long-term problem.

5.30 pm

**Mr. David Congdon** (Croydon, North-East): I had not intended to make this point, but, having heard the point made by Opposition Members about community charge arrears, I really do think that local authorities must make every effort to collect them. One of the biggest complaints that constituents make to me is the additional amount that is added to their community charge bill because others have not paid their community charge. We know that under the old rating system people had to pay for those who did not pay the rates, but that was not visible. It was the visibility of the community charge which caused so much resentment. It is very important, therefore, to collect it.

The new council tax will be much fairer than the community charge. As a member of a local authority for 16 years and chairman of Croydon's finance committee for six years, I was pleased to play a part in that authority's efforts to ensure that the community charge was collected properly and efficiently. Many authorities decided not to do so but to make the biggest mess that they could of it and then to complain when they were unable to collect the amounts demanded. It is imperative that all local authorities do their best to collect the council tax. That is why I welcome the reports. They provide a proper basis for local authorities to set in train the procedures, computer systems and so on that are needed to collect the new council tax.

It is easy to argue that the Government ought to make more money available. I am not convinced that the Government ought to fund the full cost to local authorities. That would provide no incentive for authorities to ensure that they collect the council tax efficiently. It is too easy to say, "We need another 30 staff here and another 40 staff there if we are to collect the new tax." The truth, however, is that the new tax can be properly collected if efficient systems are set up. It can be collected for an amount significantly less than that which is needed to collect the community charge. Therefore, I welcome the proposals contained in the reports.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) suggested that the Government ought to pay more towards the cost, but where does the Government's money come from? It comes, in any event, from the taxpayer. It is taken from either one pocket or another.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** That is a bogus argument.

**Mr. Congdon:** It is not a bogus argument. The Government have no money of their own. They have to raise money. The problem with some Opposition Members is that they seem to think that the Government's money grows on trees. It does not. We have to exercise proper control over the nation's finances. We ought not to tax people any more than is needed. It is right to set targets for local government by making sure that central Government pays only a percentage of the cost. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) said that most local authorities believe that the amounts that have been provided by the Government are fair and offer the proper way forward.

I have already said that I believe that the council tax will be easier to collect. There will be no need to have a council tax register. Opposition Members have repeatedly suggested that there will have to be a register. One reason for that suggestion is that they want to demonstrate that the council tax will be very difficult to collect. I have no doubt that one or two authorities will be determined to demonstrate that it is very difficult to collect, but there is absolutely no reason why it should be difficult to collect. I believe that the people of this country will judge it to be a fair tax and that it will prove to be easy to collect.

Fewer people will pay the council tax. That will make it easier to collect. There is no minimum 20 per cent. payment by everybody. Students will be exempt——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not go too far down that path. As I said earlier to another hon. Member, we are not debating the principles of the council tax.

**Mr. Congdon:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was trying to demonstrate that, because the council tax will be easier to administer, the amount required to collect it will be reasonable. The computer systems that will be needed will not be so costly. Fewer staff will be required, because not so many people will be paying the council tax. There will be a bonus for local authorities, for in future the revenue cost of administering the local tax will be significantly less than that required to administer the community charge. We ought not to forget that point when we consider the funds that are to be made available to local authorities by means of these reports.

This is the right way forward. The reports provide for sensible levels of funding. Some local authorities will complain that it is not sufficient to meet their needs. The challenge for them is to demonstrate to their local council tax payers that their proposals for collecting the tax in their area are reasonable, fair and efficient. These reports should enable them to do so at minimum cost.

5.35 pm

**Mr. George Stevenson** (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Minister said that these reports will enable local authorities to prepare for the introduction of the council tax. That statement may be consistent with the political convenience by means of which the Government hope to extricate themselves from the mess that they have created in terms of local government finance. However, it will add to the confusion of many of my constituents and, I suspect, will add to the confusion of many people throughout the country. Having listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), I suggest that the Government may find themselves in a right old pickle.

Confusion grows on account of the fact that we are told that the council tax will be fairer and will be understood by everybody. I wonder. Recent reports suggest that no less a person than the Prime Minister is concerned about the effects of the Government's community care policy on the council tax. No Conservative Member referred to that, although between £500 million and £600 million will be required to implement that policy—if it ever is put into effect.

Confusion still reigns over the poll tax register. I am trying to be fair when I say that many hon. Members in all parts of the House have local government experience and know how difficult the situation is. Misleading and controversial statements are not what we require if we are to be clear about the Government's proposals.

It has been stated that the poll tax register will not be required. Before I became a Member of Parliament I read ministerial reports that suggested that if local authorities thought that they were going to use the poll tax register they were sadly mistaken; it would not be required and they should not use it. The same Ministers now say that the poll tax register will have to be used. However, some Conservative Members have said that there will be no need to use it. What are the Government saying? My constituents will want to know what they are saying. People throughout the country and local authorities throughout the country will also want to know exactly where the Government stand when it comes to the poll tax register.

It is clear that if the reports determine the basis of local authorities' expenditure, and if there is an individual input, a register will be required. In spite of what has been said

*[Mr. George Stevenson]*

and in spite of the denials, I submit that the poll tax register is the one that will be required. My constituents will want to know what it will cost. We have heard that it will be cheaper, but I suppose that anything would be cheaper than the poll tax, so the cost depends on the criteria on which the Government have based their conclusions. It occurs to me that if an organisation other than the Government were making such proposals and trying to maintain a sense of credibility while suggesting that they would be cheaper, it would be laughed out of court by the Government themselves. We should take what the Government are saying with a large pinch of salt.

The confusion is increased by the valuation process. I do not know how Ministers view it, but I shall respectfully suggest how my constituents view it. They have a picture in their minds of anonymous people wandering the streets, having a look at properties but not going inside or consulting anyone. They envisage those people then placing a valuation on a property and extending it to a number of properties in the same area. We are asked to believe that such an innocuous and ambiguous system—carried out by anonymous people using subjective rather than precise judgements, as the Government and the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar admitted—will reduce the number of appeals. Conservative hon. Members will know——

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove) *rose——*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Before the hon. Gentleman gives way, may I point out to him that he is beginning to debate the merits or otherwise of the council tax, whereas we are considering the funding of the changeover to the council tax.

**Mr. Stevenson:** I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall give way if it is in order to do so on a point which you have ruled out of order.

**Mr. Thomason:** I am responding to a point that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) made a moment ago, so I may be out of order. I was going to ask in what way he thought the Labour party's proposals, involving a formula with four different methods of valuing a property, were an improvement on the Government's proposals.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I advise the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) not to pursue that point.

**Mr. Stevenson:** I am grateful for your advice, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you have saved me the trouble of answering that question.

We were told that £156·1 million will be available for the introduction of the council tax—75 per cent. to come from the Government and 25 per cent. from local authorities. I had intended to emphasise the fact that that will be an extra unfair burden on local authorities, but many hon. Members have said the same thing so I shall not take up the House's time by repeating it. However, it is important to underline other elements that were mentioned by the Minister when he spoke of the ability of local authorities to meet additional expenditure.

First, we are talking about local authorities that have consistently been subject to cuts in Government expenditure. The Government should take that fact into account. Secondly, as I understand the system, supplementary credit approvals may be available to local authorities in certain circumstances after the event. In other words, local authorities will have to find the money by borrowing or by some other means and only then might they receive supplementary credit approvals from the Government. That is hardly a realistic way for the Government to encourage local authorities to fund the changes. I urge the Government, even at this stage, to examine carefully the system of supplementary approvals so that it can be made to assist local authorities to meet the requirements of the introduction of the council tax. It is not good enough for the Government to say that there is a possiblilty that supplementary approvals may be available when, on the day and at the time the resources are required, they are not available. That is hypocritical and will not deal with the problems that local authorities will face.

I look at you, Madam Deputy Speaker, with fear and trepidation because I am about to refer to a crucial factor. It has been mentioned, although not in detail, so I hope that you will give me sufficient licence. I wish to mention the way in which the resources for the introduction of the council tax are tied to the overall standard spending assessments. It is nonsense to think that one can pigeonhole such resources or expenditure without considering the total sum that the Government are making available to local authorities, because they are closely interlinked.

I offer an example of how unfair and discriminatory the SSAs have been. The report states that the boroughs of Wandsworth and Westminster are likely to receive about £500,000 from the Government for the introduction of the council tax whereas my city of Stoke-on-Trent is likely to receive £432,000. I am not surprised that Stoke-on-Trent is likely to receive less because if it received 58 per cent. of what Wandsworth and Westminster receive in SSAs, it would not have to levy a poll tax—and that is a good Labour authority.

We must examine how the Government are applying the formula for the introduction of the council tax. If the formula is as discriminatory as the SSAs, local authorities —I suspect that they will be mainly Labour-controlled authorities—will be in greater difficulty, as a result not of their inefficiency but of the Government's discrimination. *[Interruption.]* I hear the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) whispering to her hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), to whom I give way.

**Mr. Congdon:** The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) says that the proposals will favour Conservative authorities. How does he explain the fact that authorities such as Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark benefit considerably simply because they are inner-London authorities?

**Mr. Stevenson:** If the hon. Gentleman examines the proposals as a whole he will see that a different picture emerges—it is a system as discriminatory as the SSAs. He did not challenge the example that I gave of my local Labour-controlled authority being so heavily discriminated against in terms of the SSAs, and nor did he challenge my contention that the attitude behind the SSAs is

absolutely critical to our consideration today. I make that point to urge the Government to look carefully at that relationship.

I suppose that anything that replaces the poll tax must be welcome; nothing could be worse. However, in presenting the reports the Government are trying to give the impression that local authorities are to blame for the present situation. They are laying out the ground to try to convince the public to give local authorities the blame again if the council tax does not work—and it certainly will not work. That is disingenuous and does not relate to the Government's mishandling of local government finance over the past decade. I hope that the public will take note of what we say and will not be taken in by the Government's attempt to ensure that if the council tax creates problems it will be someone else's fault, not theirs.

I hope that the Government's attitude to the introduction of the council tax will give more encouragement than the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), gave us. I was staggered by his complacent attitude when he said that the Government were aware how important the subject was, and of the problems that local government might face—and then said what they were doing about that. Ministers visited 30 local authorities. Big deal! Wowee! Blimey! I wonder which authorities those were, and what their representatives said to Ministers. I hope that the Government will have a more positive approach to the subject than Ministers have so far shown.

Apparently, visiting authorities—no fewer than 30 of them—was not the only thing that the Government were doing. They were organising seminars, too, so that Ministers could go round the country telling intransigent, irresponsible, ineffective, inefficient local authorities how good poll tax mark 2 would be. I hope that the Government will show a more positive and constructive approach to the subject than that.

Local authorities need to know that the council tax will not be implemented at their cost. That tax is a reaction to the mess that the Government created with the poll tax, so the Government should shoulder the responsibility, and not seek to blame local authorities for their own incompetence.

5.53 pm

**Mr. Michael Bates** (Langbaurgh): I have been interested to see a certain amount of hand-washing going on among the Opposition. They are quick to take the credit when things go well with their councils, but as soon as league tables are produced showing how clever or otherwise councils have been about bringing in the money, they seem to wash their hands of all responsibility. They claim that that is not their problem but results from the Government's under-resourcing. That seems to be the knee-jerk socialist reaction. Whenever socialists see a table of grants available, they immediately scream for more to be able to do their jobs properly. In contrast, the culture that Conservatives are trying to create means that we are concerned not with the money coming in but with the services going out. I shall focus my attention on that.

If the grants are to be made for the implementation of the council tax, which we all support—Langbaurgh is to get £245,000, and Middlesbrough £243,000—it is right to ask what value for money people in those areas will get for those sums. That is a fair question. The last time that such special grants were made they were to assist with the introduction of the community charge. Councils said, "Give us the money; give us the resources. We shall introduce high technology, and collect the charge." Clearly they have failed in that objective. How many councils have failed to deliver?

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) said that her postbag was not bulging with questions about the council tax, but perhaps it was bulging with letters from people wrongly accused of not paying the community charge, or people who have not been asked to pay. The information technology systems in place do not seem to offer value for money. I suggest that one way round the difficulties in which some Labour councils find themselves would be to go back to the suppliers of the information technology software and ask for a discount on the basis that its performance in dealing with the community charge over the past five years has not been too grand.

We need to focus on one key factor—accountability. That is what is needed in local government, and we seek to introduce it. To achieve accountability, a system needs to be easily understood. I am amazed at the nostalgia for the rating system. Hon. Members talk about complications, and claim that people cannot understand the capital value of their homes. Of course people understand that; it is manifestly easy to understand. Do the Opposition claim that people understood the system for calculating the rates —that notional system of applying some multiple to a rent that had been calculated for 1973? Of course people did not understand it. That is one reason why we introduced the community charge. People understood a flat rate charge for local services. That is why we are introducing the council tax, which is a further improvement, and an attempt to create even more accountability. It is important that we get that message across.

**Mr. Stevenson** *rose*——

**Mr. Bates:** No, I shall not give way, because I want to develop my argument a little further, if I can.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman can, as he seems to be going wide of the subject under consideration. I have made that point before. The hon. Gentleman must look more closely at the reports.

**Mr. Bates:** I shall certainly bear those points in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, given the amounts of money in the grants that will go towards the purchase of equipment to assist the smooth transition to the council tax, it is fair to examine the effectiveness of the staff and technology which is in place to run the community charge. Clearly, when 30 per cent. of the community charge for Langbaurgh remains uncollected, the system is not a great success—it costs individual charge payers an average of £37 each. That is why it is right to introduce the system that makes people aware of that fact, setting out on the charge bill the sum that people have to pay because other people sought to evade their responsibilities.

The Opposition have given assurances that there is no campaign to support non-payment, yet they will understand that there is a certain scepticism about that. The fact that 27 to 30 Labour Members of Parliament have yet to pay their full community charge is hardly a lesson or

*[Mr. Bates]*

an encouragement to people to pay their full contribution for local services. It is shoving the burden and the responsibilty on to somebody else—a familiar tack.

That behaviour has not been accepted. The record was the subject of some elections in Langbaurgh last week. I am delighted to see that the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) is present. I am sure that she, too, recognises the tremendous achievement of the two Conservative councillors who, by taking over Labour seats, returned a formerly Labour-controlled authority to an absence of overall control—if, that is, there can be said to be any real difference between an absence of overall control and Labour control.

**Ms. Marjorie Mowlam** (Redcar): No one welcomes a hung council, which presents additional problems of administration and management. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the current high rate of non-payment and uncollectability of poll tax in Langbaurgh is unacceptable and does no service to the people, but will he tell us why that position exists? Is he saying that local government officers are incompetent? What is his explanation of this serious problem?

**Mr. Bates:** I am happy to answer that question. Should an authority claim that the collection of community charge is someone else's responsibility, or should it accept responsibility for the task? I think that, if an authority has been put in place to provide services and therefore to collect revenue, that authority is accountable for the collection of community charge. The chairman of the council and the leader of the ruling group are responsible for directing the council.

I can offer some sympathy to Langbaurgh on one ground: only 109 per cent. of the money paid to the district council stays there, because 90 per cent. is passed on to Cleveland county council. People feel that they are not directly accountable for the moneys that are raised and spent simply because they do not see the correlation between what is paid to Langbaurgh and the services provided by Cleveland.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I fear that the hon. Gentleman has forgotten all about the report.

**Mr. Bates:** I am merely responding diligently to Opposition interventions, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The council tax is fair. To say that the grants are not sufficient is a knee-jerk reaction—a washing of hands and a cop-out. The amounts involved represent huge investments on behalf of the British taxpayer, and the British taxpayer will demand results.

6.2 pm

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan** (Cardiff, West): I shall try to adhere more closely than other hon. Members to the strictures that you have placed on them, Madam Deputy Speaker, and relate my comments directly to the reports that we are discussing. I believe that I am the first Welsh Member to speak today—or, at any rate, the first Welsh Opposition Member.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** No.

**Mr. Morgan:** Well, I am the first Welsh Labour Member to speak. Anyway, I wish to concentrate on the Special Grant Report (Wales).

The position of Wales in respect of central Government funding has always been different from that of England. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) said that people did not understand the old rating system, but that is not really true of Wales. When Wales was subject to a rateable value-based system, the low capital values in the area clearly required a larger Government contribution to bring the quality of services up to the required England-and-Wales average. Under the poll-tax system, there was no formula that people could easily grasp as they grasped the link between lower property values and a larger Government contribution. A sword of Damocles was poised over Welsh local government finance: the only basis on which Wales could expect a larger contribution from central Government was the previous system.

Now, five years later, we find ourselves entering a second transitional phase. It can be seen from the figures included in the two reports that Wales needs a larger Government contribution to provide the same average level of services as we begin to return to a property-based —or semi-property-based—formula, including a new banding system.

In terms of property valuation, Wales is a different world. The Welsh do not move around so much; they do not expect to market their houses and thus to establish high property values, which makes a property-based local finance system very tricky. Let me illustrate that by means of an anecdote. I recall, in my younger and fitter days, running a half-marathon in the Cynon valley, which has perhaps the lowest average property values in the United Kingdom. At the halfway point I crossed the river and ran up the Mountain Ash side of the valley. As I crossed the river in a state of fearful exhaustion, a dogleg in the road revealed a house directly in front of me. A sign on it read "Asbestos prefab for sale: apply within".

Where in Brentwood and Ongar could such a simple description of a property asset be found? No marketing techniques taught at Harvard business school would be needed to extract the best price for such a house; if it is an asbestos pre-fab, the vendor should say as much. He will thus secure a quick sale, perhaps within a couple of days. That house may have been of better quality than others in the area, but, in any event, properties are sold for £1,000 or £1,500 in parts of Wales. It is an entirely different world —which is why Wales still needs a larger Government contribution than England during the transitional period. I trust that the 90 per cent. contribution that obtained under the rating system will be returned under the new property-based system, although it became hard to justify under the poll tax. I hope that the Minister will give us a guarantee to that effect; otherwise, the level of services will fall.

The other problems involved have been mentioned many times, and, of course, they affect my constituents enormously. Morale is low in local authority treasurers' departments. They have invested in computers and staff training, and have got the magistrates courts tuned up to deal with the uncollectability of the poll tax. Now, suddenly, the Government are trying to approve transitional expenditure and to return to property valuation, albeit with a banding system, and all that work has been thrown into reverse. The magistrates courts have been told that they can go on short time in a couple of

years, once the hangover of five years of the poll tax has been dealt with—five years of perhaps the biggest single mistake that any post-war Government have made: the Tory groundnuts scheme multiplied by 10. I suppose that that is what historians will refer to the poll tax fiasco as —if you do not mind my finishing a sentence with a preposition, Madam Deputy Speaker; I half expected to see you rise at that point.

The worst thing of all about the yo-yoing from property tax to head-based tax back to property-based tax with banding is the effect that it has had on our democracy. I shall not go into detail, but it is especially true in constituencies such as mine with large inner-city populations, numerous bedsits, a high turnover of rented accommodation and many people on social security living in bed and breakfast accommodation. Where turnover is high, many people have been lost from the electoral register, and that must have an adverse effect on the health of our democracy. I am sure that, whatever your doubts about its relevance to the reports, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will agree with the proposition that our first job as Members of Parliament must be to defend the efficacy of British democracy. The poll tax fiasco has done more to damage that than anything else that has been done in the past 100 years.

6.10 pm

**Mr. Michael Stephen** (Shoreham): I have listened with interest to the speeches made by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) that we must consider the money that we are being asked to give local authorities today in the context of the huge sums that our constituents, as taxpayers, contribute to local government yearly. They give local government no less than £39·9 billion—nearly one quarter of our total national expenditure.

I cannot help feeling—I may be wrong—that some Opposition Members think that the Conservative party does not care about local government or value its work. I have to tell them that I have often discussed local government matters with my hon. Friends and with ministerial colleagues and I have not detected any such feeling. I have served in local government for six years myself and I greatly value the work that local government does. It has a long and proud tradition and I pay tribute to the numerous councillors of all political persuasions who work very long hours for very little money and for the most part deliver very good services to those whom they represent.

My hon. Friends and I value the work of local government, but we are not uncritical. We think that the British people may not be getting quite such good value for money from local government as they might. I believe that there are too many councils, that they are too expensive and that, in some councils, there is a degree of incompetence which should not and cannot be tolerated and which certainly would not be tolerated in the private sector.

In England and Wales alone, there are 47 county councils, 333 non-metropolitan districts, 36 metropolitan districts and 33 London boroughs. Ours is a small island and, bearing in mind that we could add to that figure the hundreds of parish and town councils, we are perhaps the most over-governed country in the western world. As if that were not enough, Opposition Members talk about regional government, which would cost about £375 million a year. I can think of much better things to do with £375 million than to waste it on regional assemblies.

We must draw a clear distinction between local delivery of services and local political decision-making. I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that our constituents expect their services to be delivered locally through local offices to which they can go if something goes wrong and to have elected representatives to whom they can go if they do not get satisfaction. That does not mean, however, that we need a political decision-making body every 35 miles the length and breadth of the land.

My second point is that local government is too expensive. It follows from the fact that we have too many councils that we have too many councillors. Leaving aside parish and town councillors, we have no fewer than 25,087 councillors——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is falling into the trap into which many other hon. Members on both sides of the House have fallen. He must relate his remarks more closely to the reports.

**Mr. Stephen:** I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Let me, then, deal with some of the comments made by other Members on the specific matter to which the report relates. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said that a kind of poll tax register would have to be maintained for the purpose of administering the council tax. I do not believe that to be the case.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles)—one of his hon. Friends—confirmed precisely that?

**Mr. Stephen:** My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) must speak for himself. My opinion is that a register would not be needed. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South will recall that, under the old rating system, the rate bill was sent to the household and the people in that household would work out among themselves how it would be paid. Those who thought that the rateable value of their property should be reduced had to apply for a reduction. Those who felt that they were entitled, by virtue of their personal circumstances, to have their bill reduced also had to apply. The council tax will be no different. Bills will be sent out to households on the assumption that two people live in them. If only one person lives in a household, that person must apply for a reduction.

The valuation system to be adopted will be the same rather rough-and-ready system that was used by the Inland Revenue to place properties in a rateable value category. I am glad to hear that the private contractors who have been entrusted with the task of valuing properties are using modern technologies such as hot air balloons to perform it more effectively!

The new system will be much simpler than the old rating system, because we shall not have to place on each house a specific value down to the last pound. We shall merely have to identify it as a band-C or band-D house, or whatever. That is a rough-and-ready approach. There will be——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am afraid that it is too rough and ready. How does it relate to the introduction of the council tax and the moneys needed for it?

**Mr. Stephen:** I was simply responding to remarks that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South was allowed to make, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) about the need for information technology. The world of information technology has undergone remarkable changes in the past five years. I know that, because I am a consultant to a company in the information technology field—and I must declare my interest in that respect. It is now no longer necessary for any local or central government department to own any computers, to employ anyone to operate them or to lease or own any buildings in which to house them. Departments need only tell one of the many private-sector companies what data to put in at one end and what they expect out of it at the other. They can leave to the private sector the task—a task for which it is much better equipped than local government—of working out what computers to use, who to employ and how to do the job. I commend that way of operating to any local authority faced with the job of introducing the software and hardware that may be necessary for the administration of the council tax.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said that subsidies should be given to areas with low rateable values. I entirely agree with him that central Government subsidy is a legitimate function and that areas unable to raise sufficient money from their local people can rightly expect a subsidy from the rest of the country. My ministerial colleagues are aware of that point and give effect to it.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West also referred to morale in local authority treasurers' offices. He would surely agree that morale depends on the quality of leadership that those people receive. If they are led by dismal Jimmies who can do nothing more than wring their hands and moan about lack of Government money, it is hardly surprising that they are demoralised. If, on the other hand, as is the case in most Conservative-led local authorities, those people are led by positive people with the attitude that they can do something, rather than that they cannot, I suspect that morale is higher.

I welcome the report and believe that the money should be given to local government and used for the specified purpose, but a great deal needs to be done before the people of this country receive the value for money from local government and the efficient delivery of local services which they are entitled to expect.

6.20 pm

**Ms. Marjorie Mowlam** (Redcar): The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) referred to proposals for regional government. He should check whether those are the proposals of the President of the Board of Trade and be careful that he does not direct criticisms at the Opposition Benches. Some of those proposals come from the Government.

Langbaurgh, to which reference has already been made, welcomes the special grant because we desperately need it. It is sad that it has come so late and in such a small amount. Many of the problems that we face will be compounded when the council tax is introduced. If the grant had been available when it could have been used to good effect by the local authority, we could have dealt with some of the problems of uncollectability mentioned by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates).

The special grant will arrive when we already have problems with implementation in Langbaurgh. It will add to the problems and it will take us longer to solve the difficulties. It will help, but it has not arrived at the right time or in the right amount to deal with the serious problems facing Langbaurgh.

Another problem that we will face as a result of the special grant is that it does not take account of the nature of households. There are many one-parent households in Langbaurgh. The special grant does not relate to the make-up of the constituency and will not be the right amount to deal with the extensive problems facing us.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh referred to non-payment. I agree with him that it is unacceptable that others should pay, but he should be more straightforward and consider why that problem exists. There is a difficulty with non-payment, but we have a serious problem with collectability because of the nature of the poll tax. The Opposition have highlighted that problem on many occasions and it must be addressed. Langbaurgh had been caught by that problem.

No grant can take account of the difficulties that councillors and officers of local authorities have faced in trying to implement the poll tax in the transition to the council tax. The previous lack of funding has left morale very low. The hon. Member for Shoreham made a facile and silly point when he said that Conservative authorities are positive and dynamic and that the dismal Jimmies in Labour authorities caused the problems. That is not the case. It is clear from representatives of local authorities of both political persuasions and of representatives of hung authorities that there is a serious morale problem.

Some problems arise for political reasons with powers being removed. There is also a serious problem because both Labour and Conservative councillors have difficulties in doing their job. We must consider the issue of civic duty. That is not a party political point and the serious problem of morale must be addressed if we are to deal with the problems that local authorities will face.

**Mr. Bates:** I am interested in the point about uncollectability. What makes it easier for 400-odd councils to collect more community charge as a percentage of their budget than we do in Langbaurgh? What makes it more collectable in those areas?

**Ms. Mowlam:** If the hon. Gentleman had been in Langbaurgh a little longer with his predecessors from the Labour party or from his party, he would know that Langbaurgh council had had an on-going difficulty. Together with the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, we met Minister after Minister in cross-party delegations to consider the difficulties with standard spending assessments. The SSAs have taken money from the council year after year and the council has had to take money from Peter to pay Paul. There have been serious problems in relation to sufficient staffing across departments and having people who want to stay with a council with such serious problems.

We must consider the confidence of officers, and councillors from both parties acknowledge that we have a

problem. I have addressed that problem in cross-party discussions and I hope that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh and I can consider it with the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry in the future.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh knows the geography of the area as well as I. Many people work outside the area on rigs and many work in London. We have a mobile population which is sometimes considered to be an inner-city problem. Our area has the second highest unemployment level in the United Kingdom. It is second only to Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Morgan:** My hon. Friend is getting across the message very clearly that only a small part of the problem of collectability relates to the Tory mythology of the "Won't pay" extremist Trotskyite groups which are encouraged by Militant Labour Members. Any city treasurer would claim that the overwhelming majority of the difficulties of collection relate to the mobility of population, particularly among 18 to 25-year-olds who simply disappear or who go from one property to another every two or three months. They crash-pad out here, crash-pad out there, return home and then leave home again. No one really knows where they are. It is very difficult to discover someone's whereabouts during the three months that someone qualifies to pay the poll tax. That is why the Government have scrapped the poll tax five years after they introduced it.

**Ms. Mowlam:** I concur with my hon. Friend. We are not overwhelmed by Trots in Langbaurgh, as I am sure Conservative Members are aware. However, some people do not pay and I met one in my surgery on Saturday. That 82-year-old lady could not pay her poll tax or her electricity bill. She put the bills in front of me and asked me what she was meant to do. Some people are not paying because they do not want to; people on the Government's basic state pension cannot pay.

When he referred to the difficulties, the hon. Member for Langbaurgh said that the Labour party was interested only in the culture of grabbing money. He said that we always want more and that we are not interested in efficient expenditure. I can assure him that hon. Members on both sides of the House are very interested in efficient expenditure and a decent customer service. However, we need to know where the money is coming from and when so that we are not paying 1991 bills as a result of a late Government handout and afterthought in respect of computerisation. If we had known about the grant, we could have planned an efficient service. We cannot do that because of the short notice.

Because of the lottery of funding, whether that be through the assisted status scheme, city challenge, or a development corporation, we must fish from pond to pond to try to run an efficient local government service.

I am with the hon. Gentleman all the way. Yes, let us have efficient services, but let us have a culture that delivers public money to local authorities so that they can function efficiently. Local councillors at whatever level and of whatever party are finding it impossible to do an efficient job because of the incompetence of central Government.

6.29 pm

**Mr. Paul Murphy** (Torfaen): It is always a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam). Opposition Members take to heart her comments about the culture of local government.

Before I comment on the debate proper, I make a technical point to the Under-Secretary of State for Wales about precisely which document we are dealing with. Some days ago, we obtained from the Vote Office the Local Government Finance (Wales) Special Grant Report No. 40 under section 88 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Earlier this afternoon, my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), the Opposition Deputy Chief Whip, indicated that we are dealing with the Local Government Finance Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992, under section 146 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The confusion over which document we are to use, coupled with other matters that have been mentioned in the debate, including the revelation that hot air balloons will be used to value the people of Wales, or at least their houses, do not inspire much confidence in how the Government will deal with the implementation of the council tax.

Although we are dealing with grants of £6 million paid to Welsh district councils to administer the new council tax, hon. Members talked about the adequacy of that settlement and the detailed nature of the implementation of the new council tax. In Wales, the figure is £6 million, so we are told—that figure is in both books, so I assume that it must be right—although local government treasurers in Welsh district councils still believe that that is not adequate to cover the various aspects of the implementation of the council tax. The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd) said that his two district council treasurers are not happy with the settlement that they have received, and nor is the treasurer of my local authority. When we look at the various factors that make up expenditure for the implementation of the tax we can see why they are unhappy. It is not simply a matter of having the staff to administer in their offices. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) and the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) both talked, although from different sides of the argument, about the need for a register. Whatever the Government say, a large number of billing authorities in Wales will have to establish some form of register to enable the council tax to work properly, and that will cost a great deal of money.

Reference has also been made to computers. If local authorities in Wales had not had the foresight to invest in computer hardware and software, they would be in serious difficulties in implementing yet another new local government finance system.

My hon. Friends the Members for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) referred to discounts, banding and benefits. All those aspects of the new local government finance system which we are to introduce in a year will cost a great deal of money. The Government—in this case, the Welsh Office—have calculated precisely how much they will give each local authority on a rule-of-thumb basis. That is not good enough. That system is based on the number of properties in a local authority area, not on the number of payers.

The hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) referred to the dismal Jimmies in the finance departments of our

*[Mr. Paul Murphy]*

local councils. That is a slur on what they do. Staff in local government finance departments must, within two or three years, deal with an enormous number of unnecessary changes in local government financial systems. Next year, they will have to deal with the demise of the poll tax. They will have to wrap up that tax; introduce a brand new tax, the council tax; deal with the growing problem of arrears; and deal with the transitional relief of the non-domestic business rate. Combine all those things together and we see that the amount of work that has to be undertaken by our local council treasury departments is beyond the expectations of what they should normally do.

The whole package is ultimately unnecessary. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) rightly said that most people in Wales will regard a penny spent on changing the administration of local government finance to be entirely the responsibility of the Government, because they caused the changes to come about and therefore should pay for their implementation.

If ever there has been an intolerable waste of public funds, it is what has been wasted on local government finance in just a few years. In Wales alone, £100 million has been squandered on the implementation and the sweetening of the poll tax. We must add to that the fact that most of our local councils will have to cut their expenditure in the coming year—although they have not yet been given the revenue support grant, which in itself is a scandal—and they will have to cut services, while the House of Commons will legislate to increase expenditure on administration.

The Conservative party has always said that it is the party of good management. If any local authority had mismanaged its finance in the way in which the Government have mismanaged theirs, they would have been in dire trouble indeed. The hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) had the cheek to talk about wasteful Labour local councils when every penny of the £6 million of Government money in Wales alone was ultimately unnecessary. The Welsh council tax will not end that. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and, although in a different context, the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) mentioned gearing. The amount that Welsh local authorities can now raise by way of revenue is extremely small. The effect of that on what is left of local democracy in Wales is indeed very bad.

**Mr. Ray Powell** (Ogmore): I regret that I was not present for the start of my hon. Friend's speech, as I was attending to House business. I am concerned about finance, particularly when it affects Ogwr borough council. The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has mentioned the 4,609 council houses that were sold by Ogwr borough council between 1981 and 1991. I do not know whether my hon. Friend has referred to the amount that has been raised by such sales, what will happen to it, or whether it can be used to build houses for my constituents in Ogwr borough who are crying out for accommodation, yet the Government are failing to respond to their demands.

**Mr. Murphy:** I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) that that money should be recycled into the local community to make new houses available for our people. However, that is another matter—but at least it would be using public money for good ends.

My point was that, necessary as the report might be, the money has simply been put into the administration of our Welsh local authorities. It has not gone to produce services for our people. One of the most tragic consequences is the instability and even chaos which have entered our local government system.

We have seen enormous changes during the past five years. We have seen value added tax increased to pay for the appalling chaos of the poll tax. The cost of implementing the council tax will lead to a tremendous lack of confidence among people in local government and in Wales as a whole in any regime of council finance that the House approves either today or in the weeks and months ahead.

**Mr. Morgan:** Before my hon. Friend finishes his speech, will he refer to the applicability in Wales of the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) that major savings could be made by local authorities when they implement the new calculation procedure by following some new Tory slogan of, "Do your banding while you're ballooning" or, "Do your ballooning while you're banding"? Will he comment on the idea that if the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) was still the leader of Bradford city council he would probably hire Virgin Atlantic to do the ballooning because then it could be called the Branson Pickle?

**Mr. Murphy:** I am not sure how I can incorporate that idea into my final remarks, but, nevertheless, I found it enjoyable.

There is a special case for Wales. I address that case to the person who will speak last in the debate—the Under-Secretary of State for Wales. The changes in local government finance and the £6 million that we are approving this evening to implement the council tax have to be set alongside the changes in local government that the Welsh Office and the Government say will come about in Wales. Will the Minister assure us, and, indeed, Welsh local government, that they will implement their so-called reform of the structure of local government at the same time as they implement the council tax next year?

Will the county councils have to hold elections next year? Will they have to budget and plan? If the county councils have to set their budgets and the district councils have to collect the money for the county councils, all local government in Wales will effectively be in financial limbo. It will be frozen in the financial sense. Unless we know with some certainty what will happen to Welsh local government, all that we have dealt with this evening with regard to local government finance in Wales will be meaningless. I hope that the Minister will tell us, within the confines of the motion of course, whether implementation of the council tax will proceed alongside the reform of local government in Wales.

Of course, we shall not oppose the reports. By so doing, we would plunge many local authorities into penury. But we accept them with a certain reluctance based on the uncertainty and instability in the local government systems in both England and Wales. I hope that the Minister will give us a clear idea of how that instability can be overcome, at least in the Principality.

6.43 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones):** We have had a good and useful debate, especially because we have heard speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House who have had experience of local government. As one who served on Cardiff city council for 13 years, I especially valued their speeches.

I must first respond to the query of the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) about the reports. Due to a drafting error, the reports were originally laid under the wrong power. We immediately withdrew them and have relaid them under the correct provisions. The amounts of grant set out in the reports did not change.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) fascinated me when he said that he had seen a bright spot on 10 April when he realised that he would not be practically involved in local government finance. It must have come as a blessed relief to him, and I suspect to every other member of the Labour party, that he would not be plunged into government with all the dreadful promises that the Labour party had made.

The hon. Member for Brightside went on to quote *The Times*. He suggested that councils were already engaged in a campaign against the threat to their survival. In the Principality there is the broadest agreement about the progress that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is making on the reform of local government. There is the broadest agreement that we should move to unitary authorities. That will be accomplished by 1995. I suggest that England might want to take a leaf out of Wales' book about how to make progress in that direction.

The hon. Gentleman pursued the need for a register. My hon. Friends—especially my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles)—effectively disposed of that. I suspect that the need for a register is being pursued only out of a socialist yearning to keep everything on a register. The community charge register will be used only to provide an estimate of each authority's revenue-raising power in the first year of the new council tax. It is clearly the best information available for that purpose. From the second year of the tax, the previous year's figures will be used as the basis of rate support grant. Thus, I emphasise that there will be no need for a register beyond the transitional phase.

The hon. Gentleman estimated that authorities would need much more cash. He should note that the reports before the House relate only to 1991-92 and 1992-93. Costs in 1993-94 will be taken into account in the RSG settlement for that year. I suspect that the figure that he quoted was for all three years. He complained that banding would be inaccurate. It is surely self-evident that a system which relies only on broad value bands will be less subject to error than a system based on precise valuations. As the hon. Gentleman advocates the latter type of system, he should be careful not to criticise the accuracy of our system.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the regulations were late. We have already provided all the key regulations that the authorities need. Some regulations remain to be made. The absence of less critical regulations is not inhibiting local authorities' progress. The most important regulations which remain to be made are on transitional relief. The key figures in those regulations are linked to the RSG settlement. Obviously they cannot be made until the RSG settlement details are available. But we have already told local authorities the structure of the transitional scheme and we shall shortly issue our draft regulations. Local authorities will therefore have perfectly adequate information on which to base their computer systems.

**Mr. Blunkett:** Perhaps the Minister will tell us why the provisional grant settlement has been deferred from its usual slot at this time of the year to the autumn, thus causing the local authorities considerable problems in planning their financial strategy for 1993-94.

**Mr. Jones:** If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I shall come to that in a moment. I am responding to the points that he made. He also referred to charge capping. As I have already said, council tax and transitional arrangements will be taken into account in the settlement for the forthcoming financial year.

It is essential that the Government retain a strong capping power to ensure that the introduction of the council tax is not used as an excuse for irresponsible and unnecessary expenditure. On the question about transitional reductions, the Government are committed to limiting the increase in bills which households will face as a result of changing to the council tax. The transitional scheme may vary with property bands. Details of the scheme cannot be decided until property valuation is completed.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) asked about interest on capital costs covered by supplementary credit approvals. They will be met through RSG. I was intrigued that the hon. and learned Gentleman congratulated the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), who is not with us in the Chamber, on his local success and perseverance. I wonder whether the hon. and learned Gentleman would make the same comments about the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis). The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery objected to paying himself in Montgomeryshire. I have to ask him, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), where he thinks that the money comes from. What dangerous naivety does he live in? As my hon. Friend said, the Government do not have any money of their own. It comes from taxpayers in Montgomeryshire and elsewhere. We all have to pay. The special grant arrangements and revenue support grant are the appropriate way forward.

**Mr. Morgan** *rose*——

**Mr. Jones:** Excuse me, but I must make progress.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery asked me to reject the notion that all community charge has to be paid. He seeks to rival the Labour party in being more extreme and more left-wing in that respect. The Government have repeated time after time that there can be no amnesty. I fully support——

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jones:** Forgive me, but I must make progress.

I fully support the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) that it is irresponsible to let some people off when the majority have paid and would have to pay for those who do not.

**Mr. Carlile:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jones:** No—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The Minister is not giving way.

**Mr. Carlile:** He should.

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that time is running out, and I wish to respond to everyone who has contributed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) made an excellent contribution and gave us her experience of five years on Sheffield city council. It is little wonder that the hon. Member for Brightside wanted to dismiss his time there as the distant past. She was able to explain that, under the leadership of the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), Sheffield was in a shambles. I appreciated her argument that Derbyshire cricket club brings more credit to the county than Derbyshire county council. That would not be difficult.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) was concerned that disabled people might be overlooked. I hope that they will not be. We are aiming to provide reductions for people who are substantially and permanently disabled, which will ensure that no disabled person pays a higher bill because they need more space as a result of their disability.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) asked whether supplementary credit approvals were possible. They will be available up to a total of £41·2 million in England and will be provided against expenditure on preparation. Each authority will have a maximum allocation, based on the number of properties. As the Minister said at the outset, if any SCAs are not applied for they will be recycled to other authorities that may need them. The hon. Gentleman also alleged discrimination against Stoke-on-Trent. There is no discrimination against his authority. It receives less grant than other authorities because it has fewer dwellings. A common amount for each authority would be nonsense. Why should a small shire district get as much as Birmingham or Manchester?

My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) robustly advocated our progress in shouldering the burden of paying for local government finance. How right he was. The consequences of the "Don't pay" campaign advocated by Opposition parties was merely to shove the burden on to someone else. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend say that Conservative successes in two local elections in his constituency were the logical outcome of that campaign.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan)—my neighbour and an old school friend—mentioned the need for a higher level of grant support in Wales. I appreciate his point. The level of support in Wales is appropriate, and it will continue to be. We have taken that into account in setting different, lower property bands for the council tax in Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) related his six-year experience of local government. I agree with his tribute to many people in local government who give so much of their time to serve their electorates.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) apologised for the fact that she could not be here for the winding-up speeches. I was glad of her welcome for the grant reports. I appreciate her desire to make the best case for her part of the world. That is the natural and imperative duty of all hon. Members, and I applaud her spirit in seeking to work with my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh.

The hon. Member for Torfaen claimed, unsurprisingly, that some councils in Wales feel that the special grants that we have prepared are not enough. Generally, the special grants have been welcomed by Welsh local councils. Three Welsh local councils were used in the survey by CSL which helped us to introduce the grants—Delyn, Newport and Monmouth.

In his opening speech, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary told the House about the considerable degree of work that is under way to ensure that preparations for the council tax proceed smoothly to its introduction on 1 April next. There is close collaboration between central Government, local government and key organisations such as the Valuation Office agency. I have been very heartened by the input made by all concerned and, speaking from my own experience in Wales, by the constructive and professional approach that local authorities are taking to preparing for the new tax.

The valuation banding exercise is nearly complete, and considerable progress has been made on other important aspects of implementation, including, on the Government's part, secondary legislation and practice notes. In Wales, provision has been made for the electronic transfer of valuation lists in a variety of formats that best suit the needs of each authority. Most Welsh councils will have lists sorted in community order. At all stages in the preparatory process we have taken care to consult local government and other interested parties and to consider their views carefully.

**Mr. Morgan:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jones:** I know that the hon. Member for Cardiff, West has so much hot air to contribute—but not in the time left to me.

Final decisions on any transitional arrangements under the council tax cannot be arrived at until details of local tax bases are complete and have been analysed. We have not yet made a decision on whether transitional arrangements will be put in place for Wales. We will consider the need for transitional relief if significant numbers of households face large increases as a result of the new tax. If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales considers, in all the circumstances, that a scheme of transitional relief is appropriate, he will consult the local authority associations on the arrangements and how to fund them. Draft regulations setting out a framework for the scheme—if there is to be one—have been issued.

The level of council tax and transitional arrangements will also have implications for total standard spending and aggregate external finance under the local government revenue settlement for 1993-94. The Government wish to take those implications into account and for that reason —this brings me to the point mentioned by the hon. Member for Brightside—they announced last month their decision to postpone the provisional settlement for 1993-94 until the autumn. I am sure that the House will agree that it is essential that we take into account the most up-to-date information in determining the settlement.

The Government's decision to make special grants available in respect of council tax preparation costs has

been welcomed by local authorities. The grant allocations set out in the two reports before the House will be of considerable help to local authorities in their preparations.

**Mr. Morgan:** Will the hon. Member give way?

**Mr. Jones:** I know that the hon. Gentleman has the old school tie connection. I suppose that I cannot resist that.

**Mr. Morgan:** Will the hon. Gentleman take up the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) about employing hot air balloons to conduct the valuation and banding exercise? If so, can he tell us how he will use some of the expense that that might save? He has spent a lot of Welsh Office money on changing the notepaper since he introduced his new title. He does not want to be called Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; he wants to be called Parliamentary Secretary.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is outside the province of the motion. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough——

**Mr. Morgan** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I do not expect to have a discourse with the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Jones:** I am sorry that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. It was a silly intervention and turned out to be nothing more than something out of his hot air department again.

For those authorities whose expenditure exceeds their grant allocation, by far the greater part of the excess will be met from central Government support within aggregate external finance under the local government revenue settlements for Wales and England.

The grant allocations and arrangements set out in the special grant reports for England and Wales are generous and fair. They clearly demonstrate the Government's commitment to facilitating the smooth and timely implementation of the council tax on 1 April 1993 which, contrary to the recent gloomy prognostications made by the hon. Member for Brightside, is firmly on course.

I apologise to any hon. Member if I have not replied to their questions in the short time available, and in the time spent dealing with interventions, some of which I should not have wasted my time on. I will endeavour to write to all the hon. Members to whom I have not replied. I commend the reports to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Special Grant Report (No. 4) (House of Commons Paper No. 61), which was laid before this House on 17th June, be approved.

### Local Government Finance (Wales)

*Resolved,*

That the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1992 (House of Commons Paper No. 80), which was laid before this House on 19th June, be approved.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

## Community Charges

6.59 pm

**The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood):** I beg to move,

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

The range of local authority responsibilities is enormous—from education and planning to refuse collection; from social services to street lighting. The range will soon be extended to cover care in the community. Local authorities enable local people to have influence over the quality, efficiency and range of local services. That is the stuff of local debate and the substance of local elections. The local delivery of certain services—many of them essential to their communities—is a central feature of a pluralist society.

Because of the range and scale of their responsibilities, local authorities spend very large sums of money. In each county and district area, local authorities spend well over £1,000 for every man, woman and child each year. For example, last year, the total spending per adult was £1,840—a very large sum of money. Total local government expenditure is now running at around £65 billion. That means that local authorities have a great deal of choice and discretion over how many and what kind of non-statutory services to supply, and discretion over the style, quantity and quality of many statutory services. Of course, everyone in the House believes in local government and wishes it to flourish.

It gives me no pleasure, therefore, to move the motion. I should prefer there to be no need to cap at all. But, unlike Labour Members, we are prepared to face up to the problems that excessive public expenditure can pose. Most now agree that there should be overall limits on both public expenditure and taxation. Some Labour Members are looking a little quizzical, but the Labour party proposed caps for its regional assemblies in its general election programme. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) is always trying to exert some control over the spending proclivities of his hon. Friends, although we know that he is often unsuccessful. As local authority spending is now nearly 9 per cent. of gross domestic product and about a quarter of total public expenditure, that, too, has to be under some control to ensure that total public expenditure is under control.

For the 1991-92 budget cycle, we acted by announcing provisional capping criteria in the preceding autumn as authorities had suggested. When authorities came to set their budgets, they knew our intentions for capping. The result speaks for itself. Local authority budgeted spending was about only 0·5 per cent. more than the amount that we provided in our settlement for that year.

The Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991 allowed us, in the 1992-93 budget cycle, to consider authorities budgeting below £15 million for the first time. We again announced provisional capping criteria in advance of authorities setting their budgets.

What has happened this year? More than 400 authorities have budgeted within or very close to the limits implied by the provisional criteria. Overall, the total of local authority budgets is about 1 per cent. more than the amount for which we made provision in our settlement for 1992-93. That result is an achievement of our capping

*[Mr. John Redwood]*

strategy. I should also like to see it as a tribute to the good sense and responsibility of much of local government. All that is a far cry from the alarmist comments of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) on Second Reading of the Local Government Finance and Valuation Bill, when his remarks went over the top.

This year's capping round began last November when the former Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), announced the provisional criteria for designating authorities for capping which he intended to adopt. Local authorities were told, at that time, that they should not assume that small amounts of spending above the criteria would be allowed. My right hon. Friend said that he intended to consider the effect of boundary changes on authorities' budgets for 1991-92 and 1992-93.

My right hon. Friend stated, when he laid before the House the 1992-93 settlement reports on 23 January 1992, that he stood firmly by his intentions for the capping criteria which he had announced on 26 November. On 12 March, the former Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), confirmed to the House, in a written answer, the intention to use the same provisional criteria.

Local authorities knew in advance of setting their 1992-93 budgets what to expect. Our aim this year was to act to achieve as much as possible in advance by laying down clear and fair guidelines, with as little as possible having to be done by actual capping.

On 14 May, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment took his capping decisions. He had regard to all appropriate considerations, including the budgets which authorities had set, the effect of boundary changes on authorities' budgets for 1991-92 and 1992-93, and those provisional criteria.

My right hon. and learned Friend made only one modification to the original criteria by including a de minimis proviso—where the reduction from capping would be less than £1·50 per adult, he agreed not to cap. In deciding that, he had regard to a number of considerations applicable to this year. As he told the House, it should not be assumed that in any future year we would include a similar de minimis proviso.

On the basis of those clear principles, 10 authorities were designated for capping. Of the 39 county councils, 37 budgeted below the criteria. All of the 36 metropolitan districts budgeted below the criteria. Of the 33 London boroughs, 30 budgeted below the criteria. Of the 296 non-metropolitan districts, 291 budgeted below the criteria.

I remind the House that no authority is capped if it budgeted at or below its standard spending assessment. To those Labour Members who dismiss SSAs as inadequate, I emphassise that, in total, they increased by almost 7 per cent. this year—well above the expected rate of inflation—which built on a substantial 19·4 per cent. rise in 1991-92. We have listened to local authority representations on those issues and we have acted.

**Hon. Members:** No, the Government have not.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): That is not the case if my hon. Friend considers the London borough of Hillingdon, which has done everything in its power to act responsibly in its financial management. Because of the concerns expressed by the three hon. Members who represent seats within the borough of Hillingdon—my hon. Friends the Members for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and myself—my hon. Friend should be aware of the special circumstances in the borough, namely, the large influx of refugee children who must be accommodated because Heathrow happens to be in the borough. Hillingdon is also affected adversely by the financial formula—because many of its schools—three quarters of them in Ruislip-Northwood—have opted out. Therefore, the Minister should be much more generous in our case.

**Mr. Redwood:** I am well aware of the worries of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Hillingdon. They have been assiduous in putting their case to the Government. In February, there was a meeting with the Prime Minister, and the Government again considered their representations. Unfortunately for my hon. Friends, we concluded that the SSAs were fair and that, therefore, the capping had to apply in the way that I have reaffirmed tonight. I assure my hon. Friends that the representations were considered carefully. No one could have done more than my three hon. Friends in putting the case for Hillingdon very forcibly to the Government.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): Although I accept the decision that the Government have made on the SSAs, of which many will not approve, it would be welcome to both sides of the House if the Government told the Department of the Environment and other Departments—in the case of Greenwich, the Department of Health which is responsible for social service SSAs—that they should be willing to receive deputations and examine the way in which factors work. As other hon. Members will no doubt point out, the fact that Greenwich looks after children at the cost of £39 a year, when the neighbouring borough of Lewisham, with virtually identical characteristics, spends £139, shows that the factor system operates beyond all reason.

**Mr. Redwood:** Of course I shall look again at any representations for next year's SSAs that my hon. Friends or Opposition Members wish to make. The Department always looks carefully at the data for each year—the base data on which needs are assessed are often revised annually—and at the methodology, when people present new arguments or fresh evidence that needs to be considered.

**Sir Dudley Smith** (Warwick and Leamington): Although this is not the time to debate SSAs in detail because the figures are before us, will my hon. Friend undertake to continue the dialogue on SSAs with my hon. Friends and I from the Warwickshire area? We genuinely believe that the SSAs for our county are flawed.

**Mr. Redwood:** I assure my hon. Friends who represent Warwickshire that I shall look carefully at any points, on the data base or on how the SSAs are calculated, made by any hon. Member who feels that those need investigating. Some councils feel strongly about those matters. My right hon. and learned Friend and I need to be persuaded that there is something wrong with the theory and application of SSAs. They apply to many councils and must be fair across the country.

**Mr. James Pawsey** (Rugby and Kenilworth): First, I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. This is the fourth time that he has given way in his speech and I appreciate the impact that that has on his speech.

Although my hon. Friend makes an eloquent and persuasive case, he must admit that there is considerable power in the argument advanced by hon. Members representing Warwickshire. He may agree that Warwickshire has been hard done by. Although I acknowledge the additional £4 million granted to my county on appeal, the strength of Warwickshire's case is outlined, first, in the booklet that my hon. Friend has received and, secondly, in the booklet on the standard spending assessment. I hope that my hon. Friend, our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and officials at the Department will carefully consider how the SSAs——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. Interventions are getting longer and longer. *[Interruption.]* They may be of good quality, but they are too long.

**Mr. Redwood:** I am gratful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend. I repeat my reassurance that if there is a problem with the base data for next year or for the method of calculation for next year, we shall consider it. I am sure that my hon. Friends will not be shy in coming forward with suggestions and proposals.

**Mr. George Stevenson** (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The Minister will appreciate that my intervention is as crucial as those of Conservative Members. Something is clearly wrong with the SSAs when Stoke-on-Trent receives £657 per head, and Wandsworth and Westminster receive £1,500 or £1,600 per head. Is there a time limit on the Minister's willingness to receive representations from local authorities that believe that their SSAs are inadequate or unfair?

**Mr. Redwood:** Written submissions on that subject should be sent to the Department as soon as possible, because we need to make decisions for next year in good time. Particularly with the introduction of the council tax, local authorities need to know in good time what the position will be. So the window is not long but I am willing to look at new evidence. The best way to proceed is for the hon. Gentleman to send in a written submission. We can then see whether a meeting would be a good idea or whether the submission covers a new point.

Standard spending assessments have risen by about 7 per cent. this year and they rose by 19·4 per cent. the preceding year, which represents a substantial rise in permitted spending and in the grant based on that calculation. Each SSA is based on a complex formula designed to measure the needs and requirements in different local areas by a common standard. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) referred to one or two inner London areas with relatively high SSAs, but he could have mentioned others under Labour control that have even higher SSAs. Those are based on formulae according to the number of people in different categories and the type of needs in the area. He is at liberty to obtain from the Department the basis of the calculations and satisfy himself that many other inner London areas get higher SSAs than the two that he mentioned.

**Mr. Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich): The Minister says that the SSA formula is complex. Does he agree that mistakes could be made? He will recall his meeting last week with a delegation from the London borough of Greenwich, when we discussed the particular needs of refugees and he stressed that those would be reflected in the SSAs. Having taken advice on that, it is clear to me that the SSA formula does not adequately reflect the position of recently arrived refugees. There is a substantial time lag. The need is not unique to Greenwich; other London boroughs have a similar problem. Does the Minister accept that Greenwich is being penalised by a lack of provision for those needs?

**Mr. Redwood:** As I have said, the Government are satisfied that the SSAs for the current year on which capping is based are fair and correct. We review from time to time the data and formulae for ensuing years. The hon. Gentleman can see that in the past adjustments have been made to reflect changing circumstances. I remind him that the Greenwich SSA is 8 per cent. more than in 1991-92, so it is above the national average increase, and 32 per cent. more than in 1990-91. So the news is not nearly as bad as he suggests.

For each of the 10 designated authorities, my right hon. and learned Friend proposed caps or maximum amounts for their budgets. He took account of all appropriate considerations in taking those decisions and the proposed caps took account of all the relevant information available to us. As in previous years, we took the view that where, on the basis of the information then available to us, we judged that authorities were able to reduce their budgets by the full amount implied by the criteria, they should be required to do so, particularly as nearly all other local authorities had lived within the criteria—some with considerable ease.

The designated authorities were notified on 14 May of their designation, the general principles on the basis of which they were designated and the amount of our proposed cap. They then had a period of 28 days in which to inform us whether they accepted the proposed cap. If they challenged the cap, they had to suggest an alternative figure together with a supporting case.

In the event, two authorities—Langbaurgh and Middlesbrough—accepted the proposed caps. Langbaurgh's proposed cap represented a small relaxation compared with the amount implied by the principles. The other eight authorities challenged. Basildon and Greenwich proposed caps of £2·96 million and £1·62 million respectively below their original budgets. The others wished to maintain their original budgets.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I have met delegations from each of these authorities to hear their oral representations in support of their written cases for a reduced cap. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State very carefully considered the points made at those meetings, together with all the other available relevant information before taking his decisions.

In the case of five authorities—Cheltenham, Gloucester, Greenwich, Hillingdon and Lambeth—he decided that caps should be set at the level originally proposed. For the remaining three—Basildon, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire—he has decided that, in the light of their particular circumstances, some relaxation was justified.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I am glad that my hon. Friends think that that was a wise

*[Mr. Redwood]*

judgment. As a result, we have decided to increase the caps for those authorities by £1·95 million, £2·59 million and £4 million respectively.

I must emphasise that our aim during the capping process has been to require a designated authority to reduce its budget to such a level that it would no longer be excessive or represent an excessive increase. Where we judge that an authority can achieve that maximum reduction without the risk of inappropriate reductions in front-line services, we have required that of them, however tough and demanding it might be.

It is only in those cases where the circumstances of an authority are such that we judge that it would not be right within the financial year to demand the full reductions of that authority that we have decided to require a smaller reduction.

I must make it clear that, in those three cases where we have allowed an increase in the cap from the level that we originally proposed, we did so after extremely searching analysis of each of the authority's individual circumstances. My right hon. and learned Friend considers the caps of each of the eight authorities to be reasonable, achievable and appropriate, in the light of all of the individual circumstances of the authorities involved. If the House approves the draft order, it will be for each authority to decide how to live within those caps.

I have little doubt that we shall hear much from Opposition Members about the effects of capping. I can only say that time and again there are dire warnings issued about the consequences of capping which, in the event, are simply not borne out. It is for authorities to order their priorities within their caps and we are satisfied that they will be able to provide an appropriate level of service within the caps if they choose to do so.

More than 97 per cent. of local authorities have budgeted sensibly this year. Just 10 authorities, four fewer than for last year, have been designated for capping. That is the second lowest number of authorities capped in the history of rate and charge capping, despite a great increase in the number of authorities within the scope of capping following the abolition of the £15 million threshold by the Local Government Finance and Valuation Act 1991. That is an achievement in which local government as a whole can take some pleasure. It is certainly a pleasure to me.

I regret that it has proved necessary to designate even 10 authorities. Next year, with the advent of the council tax, I hope that it will not be necessary to designate any. But let there be no doubt about our resolve to ensure that the transition to the council tax is not accompanied by any great surge in spending; we are determined that the substantial Exchequer support that we now provide for local government is used to keep local taxes at affordable levels and is not frittered away on unnecessary additional spending. Local government, for its good future, needs an independent tax, which has to be brought in at sensible levels. Our aim for next year, as for this year, is that local authorities budget in line with what the country and their local taxpayers can afford.

The order, if approved, is the final step to bring the 1992-93 capping process to a conclusion. It reinforces our strategy of expenditure control and about 1·4 million charge payers stand to benefit. I commend it to the House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I remind hon. Members that the amendment has not been selected and that Madam Speaker asked for brief speeches.

7.22 pm

**Mr. David Blunkett** (Sheffield, Brightside): The first speech that I made from the Front Bench as shadow spokesman for local government four years ago was on capping. Given the exigencies of time, this may be my last speech in that role, so it is fitting that it should also be on capping.

It is suitable to quote back to the devil the devil's own propaganda, which the Minister may care to comment on. The propaganda contains phrases such as:

"Tax capping is a democratic obscenity."

Those words were uttered not by me, but by the editor of *The Times* this morning. He stated:

"Since discretionary local spending is not included in the Treasury's planning total for public expenditure, this accretion of power is pure meddling, the restless fidgeting of Treasury and environment ministers and officials. Mr. Howard and Mr. Redwood, immured in the corridors of Whitehall, have the same contempt for tiers of government below their own as do Mr. Delors and his colleagues in Brussels."

Knowing the warm feeling that the Minister of State has towards Mr. Delors and the Brussels bureaucracy, I am sure that those sentiments will give him pause for thought.

Here we are again with a Government preaching choice and denying it to the local electorate, espousing responsibility and declaring the electorate and the elected irresponsible, preaching opportunity and demanding cuts in the education, social services and leisure facilities that offer that opportunity.

**Mr. Redwood:** I resent the implication that I do not believe in or respect local government. I believe in it and think that it has an important role to play, as I made clear in my opening speech. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that, if it were in office, the Labour party would take no interest in the total level of local authority expenditure and would not control the amount of grant paid by central Government? Is he saying that the Labour party would give local authorities any money that they asked for, which is what the hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting?

**Mr. Blunkett:** The Minister's righteous indignation will have to be aimed at the editor of *The Times*, not me. No doubt he will take up the matter in other quarters.

We have always made it clear that money raised and spent locally is not the business of the national Exchequer but that of local people. That principle is accepted across the democratic world, including the United States of America, and is one to which we in this country should adhere.

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that all expenditure, whether public or private, has an effect on a national economy? If he does, will he explain how any central Government could wash their hands of one part of expenditure?

**Mr. Blunkett:** The expenditure that the Government have to raise by borrowing is something that the Government have to take into account. We disagree with the Government on what should be counted as part of the public spending totals raised through borrowing. We believe that the practices of other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development are more sensible, as they allow subsidiarity so that money can be raised from the markets at democratic levels below that of the national Government. That makes the economies of those countries much more effective and less likely to come under the pressures of the Maastricht treaty arrangements. I am sure that hon. Members from all parties would be interested to examine those policies.

There is no evidence that locally raised and spent revenue has a major impact on inflation or the Government's ability to raise from the markets the money that they need. Hence the Government's own belief that when they increased value added tax the effect on the economy was marginal. However, they seem to believe that £3 on the poll tax of the people of Gloucester will have a dramatic impact on our economy in future and the Government's ability to manage their economic policy—in so far as it exists.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's generosity in allowing me to intervene yet again in the debate.

The cap will reduce the community charge in Hillingdon borough by the princely sum of £5 per head. To my knowledge, I have not yet had a single letter from a constituent complaining at the level of community charge this year.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I can only accord with what the hon. Gentleman says—the staggering £5 reduction has obviously evoked an enormous and grateful reaction from the Hillingdon electorate and will clearly make an enormous difference to the bridging problems of the current account deficit with which the Chancellor is struggling!

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I wish to take up the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), as I have received complaints about the additional charge to poll tax payers that was necessary in order to look after refugee children. If that responsibility had been accepted by central Government, even those letters would not have arrived in my post bag.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not even have received letters about the refugee children were it not for the fact that his constituents knew that, in order to meet that responsibility, which was perfectly reasonable, given the location of Heathrow airport, their own services had to be cut. However, that is the prospect they face. It is a moral disgrace to ask the residents of a specific locality to pick up the bill for meeting such responsibilities and thus suffer reduced services. In order to fulfil their duty to the refugee children who come from around the world, Hillingdon residents inevitably have to suffer reduced services. They can do nothing about that, any more than the residents of Cheltenham can do anything about the land taken over from Tewkesbury, which has resulted in the cuts necessitated by the cap placed on them.

If it were not so serious it would be ridiculously funny to debate a £5 reduction in the bills of people in Hillingdon, £3 in Gloucester and £12 in Cheltenham.

The amount in Warwickshire is peanuts, though not in terms of cuts in services. All hon. Members and all commentators know that it is daft. Eight authorities are being capped to reduce by a tiny fraction the amount raised by local people. Neither electors, chambers of commerce and trade, newspapers, parents, MPs nor councillors in Warwickshire agree with Warwickshire being capped.

**Sir Dudley Smith:** I do not like to agree with the hon. Gentleman, but he is absolutely right. There is unanimity among all the political parties and everybody in local government.

**Mr. Blunkett:** The irony is that the only people who are in favour of Warwickshire being capped are those who do not have to live there. Those people are not worried about the day-to-day policing of the streets and do not share the concern of parents of schoolchildren or the anxiety of elderly people who need to be cared for in residential homes or by home helps in their own homes. They are not concerned about the quality of fire cover. The same applies to Gloucestershire, which is hardly the most profligate authority in Britain. Hillingdon, Warwickshire and, of course, Basildon are Conservative authorities. What about Basildon?

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Blunkett:** I shall give way to the hon. Member for the Billericay tendency.

**Mrs. Gorman:** In Basildon the cap will mean savings of £41 per charge payer per year. They would have had to pay a very high £361. That saving is welcome. We are spending the money not on such worthy causes as refugee children but on sports and parks facilities on which Basildon spends £32 per head per year. The average for the country is about £10. Those are the sort of facilities on which Basildon wasted money, and the people of Billericay and Basildon are delighted at the cap.

**Mr. Blunkett:** The voters of Basildon exercised their right to vote and elected a Tory council. That is democracy. The new leader of Basildon council can hardly be described as a wet. His local papers are already calling for his resignation for his incompetence in handling the closure of the local theatre. For the Billericay and Basildon tendencies theatres are persona non grata. The idea of culture has not yet filtered down to Basildon from the Department of National Heritage. Perhaps the new Secretary of State will step in to ensure that the measly £3,000 which would have kept the theatre open for an extra week to allow a children's production to be held is made available. *[Interruption.]* A Conservative Member says that we should shed tears. The town manager of Basildon said after the election that meeting the cuts would be devastating for Basildon. That could hardly be described as a reflection of socialist fervour. The idea that welfare rights and advice centres, youth services and facilities for the disabled that are not available from the county should not be cut should not be dismissed by sneers about tears. The people who will feel those cuts will not see anything to sneer about. But that is what the people of Basildon voted for, although on 21 May even the leader of Basildon council agreed that if the cuts had to be implemented on the basis of the original cap it would be "Goodbye Basildon".

**Mr. James Hill** (Southampton, Test): Nonsense.

**Mr. Blunkett:** I did not say goodbye Basildon: it was said by the hon. Gentleman's colleague, the leader of the Conservative council. I was not surprised that the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) welcomed the £7 million cut that his friends in the Conservative council have vigorously tried to resist now that they are in power. The hon. Member for Basildon welcomed the announcement that Basildon would have to contribute to the poll tax safety net, not understanding that locally raised money would be given away.

Conservatives are so well versed in local government finance that they are engaged in flights of fancy, such as commending to the Prime Minister the new airline agreement for Europe. Many of them are up in the air and flying away rather than having their feet on the ground and being concerned about policing, safe, clean and acceptable streets, and comfortable and safe neighbourhoods in which to live. We have not spoken enough about protecting people from an increasingly brutish and unacceptable society in which self-interest rather than self-reliance has been the order of the day. There is litter and filth and graffiti and people fear to walk on our streets at night.

In addition to education and care for our children and those in social service care and a desire for decent leisure and cultural facilities, we are interested in a civilised and decent society in which people can walk safely on the streets. Cutting policing in Warwickshire or Gloucestershire does not help one iota towards that aim. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has said, such aims are not helped by penalising an authority and making it impose more cuts because, compared with neighbouring boroughs, it got a poor standard spending assessment for the provision of children's services. Conservative Members spoke about provision in Lewisham. Wandsworth receives almost double the amount per person for children's services that is allocated to Greenwich.

At the Adam Smith Institute the Prime Minister spoke about expectations in schools. They were wise words and would have been commendable and taken seriously if, at the same time as the Prime Minister spoke about parachuting teachers to inner-city schools and increasing expenditure on them, his capping regime and his formula funding mechanisms were not cutting the spending on such schools and preventing increased expectation by parents and improved education for children. Greenwich spends £7 million more than its standard spending assessment on education. The same amount above the Government's SSA has been spent on social services in Lambeth, but the borough is expected to cut that amount in order to meet some centrally determined preconception of what should be spent on local people.

It is time for a return to a bit of basic democracy, the kind of thing that is commonplace on the continent where nobody holds councillors in the contempt in which they are held by the Government and Conservative Members. People on the continent respect local democracy and accept the right of local people and their representatives to decide what is right for them. It is short-sighted and centralist and Delorsian in its corporatism and in its harking back to the past to continue the capping regime and the diktats of central Government. That is why we are opposing the order. That is why we believe that capping is fatally flawed. That is why we believe that at some stage in the future, despite the best efforts of the continuing regime in Westminster and Whitehall, we shall return to a position where decentralised and devolved local government, with real subsidiarity, will be able to take decisions on behalf of local people—local people will have voted for it—and there will be respect for that local democracy, which is the life blood of any civilised society.

7.40 pm

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): The decision of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to cap Hillingdon, in which my constituency is situated, is both unnecessary and unjustified. Hillingdon's original budget was £167,140,000 and the cap proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend is £166,270,000. In other words, it is proposed that Hillingdon should spend £870,000 less than that it had planned, despite the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend knows that the borough faces extraordinary items of expenditure which are not of its own making but are the direct consequences of national policies. Those items include the costs of caring for 31 unaccompanied refugee children from Ethiopia, Uganda, Angola and the territory of Eritrea. I heard today that there are now another five children from Zaire and Afghanistan. The cost to Hillingdon of caring for these children last year was £936,000, a substantial sum and one that is in excess of the amount by which Hillingdon is being requested to reduce its expenditure.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities knows that, because of the outstanding and unique success of Hillingdon in 15 per cent. of its schools applying for and achieving grant maintained status—more than any other local authority in the United Kingdom—the allocation of funds through the schools formula will mean that Hillingdon will lose another £1 million. That is because the allocation of funds is based on central costs of 16 per cent. of the aggregated schools budget. In effect, this means that GM schools will receive the same cash amount for 1992-93 as they would have been eligible to receive under the old rules when they were local education authority schools.

As the LEA has fewer funds with which to do its job, it has to cut its staff costs. By the end of 1991-92, Hillingdon's education department had shrunk by 78 posts, from 216 to 138. The savings achieved for 1992-93 as a result are £6·17 million. There are now only 120 staff in post in the education department. But still Hillingdon loses £1 million as a result of the formula, which has been rigidly applied.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities knows all about this. As he has told the House, together with my hon. Friends the Members for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) and for Ruislip—Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), I went to see my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 18 February to acquaint him with the situation which we foresaw. We wished especially to emphasise the problem that Hillingdon faces in caring for unaccompanied children who are literally dumped at Heathrow and who have to be looked after. We wanted my right hon. Friend to know also of the difficulties that result from the financial formula that affects grant-maintained schools.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was extremely sympathetic and understanding. He understood the problem immediately. As a result, he arranged for a

delegation from Hillingdon to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who was then the Secretary of State for the Environment. Hillingdon was obliged, due to the extraordinary items of expenditure to which I have referred, to reduce its expenditure by the amount referred to by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities. It had to do so as a result of policies that the Government had implemented.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hayes and Harlington and for Ruislip—Northwood have made it clear in interventions—I am about to emphasise the point—that Hillingdon has an outstanding record. Since the Conservative group came to office in May 1990, with a majority of only one, it has reduced expenditure by £30 million. It has also reduced staff posts by about 1,400. I suggest that that is a truly remarkable record. It has put the borough council's finances on a sound footing. The community charge, which is £295, is by no means excessive.

Why is it that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State seems to think that Hillingdon is spending so much? I suppose it must be because of the shining example that is set by his Department in keeping down its running costs. We can only assume that it is under firm control and observing strict disciplines and that my right hon. and learned Friend is anxious to pass on the example to Hillingdon. It seems that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities has this message for Hillingdon: "At all costs you must cut your expenditure by £870,000 and adhere to the same strict disciplines that I am imposing on my Department in Marsham street."

As the House will know, for the past nine years I have been a member of the Public Accounts Committee. That has caused me, like you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to develop an inquiring mind about the cost of running central Government. Economy, efficiency and effectiveness are the watchwords of the denizens of Committee Room 16, who meet twice a week to take evidence from witnesses from the Department of the Environment and elsewhere.

I have been doing some work on my own account. I have examined the central running costs of the Department of the Environment to see how it is setting the magnificent example that it wants Hillingdon to follow. What do I find? I find that at constant prices expenditure increased from £172 million in 1990-91 to £193 million in 1991-92. It is planned to increase expenditure still further to £202 million in 1992-93. My right hon. and learned Friend's Department increased its expenditure by no less than 12·3 per cent. in 1990-91. If we take the total running costs of the Department, including those of the Property Services Agency and the Office of Water Services, at 1992-93 prices, the cost to taxpayers, including those in Hillingdon, increased from £212 million in 1990-91 to a massive £256 million in 1991-92, an increase of 20·5 per cent.

Then there are staff costs. Hillingdon is being told, like other local authorities, that it must keep down its staff costs, despite the fact that it has already shed 1,400 staff. The Department says that that reduction is not enough. What is the Department doing? What example is it setting for us? I find that the Department's staff has increased from 5,930 in 1987-88 to 6,425 in 1991-92. I wonder what has happened to the envelope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley, who is now the President of the Board of Trade, gave to his permanent secretary when he took office. It seems that it has been lost. It does not appear that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is doing very much to set an example for local authorities by curbing expenditure on excessive staff costs.

**Mr. Wilshire:** This is riveting stuff. Does my hon. Friend agree that he is making a case for capping the Government as well as local government? If that is so, I am happy to support him.

**Mr. Shersby:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention.

Unfortunately, worse is to come. One of the central problems facing Hillingdon is the schools formula and the way that it is working for GM schools. I have examined the expenditure of the Department for Education and its staffing. I find that its staff has increased by 288 since 1987 to this year.

I invite the House to consider the costs that Hillingdon will incur in setting a new budget. I was told today by the director of finance that the cost of rebilling will be £165,000. That, too, has to be found out of the capped budget. What will the community charge payers of Hillingdon gain from being capped? The answer is £4·86, which is 1·3p a day—hardly worth the effort, I suggest.

The Minister is gravely in error in capping Hillingdon. Nothing much will be gained as a result of his decision and a great deal will be lost. I invite him to consider the effect of his decision on the morale of my colleagues on Hillingdon borough council who, for the past two years, have had to take the most difficult decisions in order to achieve very considerable improvements in the public service and in the financing of the borough. Something else will be lost—my vote in the Division Lobby tonight.

7.50 pm

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): I begin with a few words about the annual argument that we have about local government. The distribution of democratic power in this country is between central Government and local government. In other nations there are different balances—in the United States between the federal Government and individual states and in Germany between the federal Government and the lander. The division of democratic power here between central Government and local government ought to be a matter of constitutional agreement that rises above disputes between the parties. Since this Government came to power in 1979, there have been about 50 statutes regulating local government. There ought to be a constitutional separation of powers upon which we can all agree. There ought not to be continual arguments in the House about interference with another tier of government. If I judge rightly the mood of the House, there is consensus about the degree of independence of local government in these matters. The odd person out is the person representing central Government.

**Mrs. Gorman:** Not a bit of it.

**Mr. Fraser:** We have just listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who gave the impression that neither he nor some of his colleagues intend to support the Minister 100 per cent. Matters relating to the constitutional division of power ought to be ones on which the House and the parties can agree. We

*[Mr. Fraser]*

should not continually be resurrecting the body of local government and digging up the tree by the roots, if that is not too much of a mixed metaphor.

My borough of Lambeth set a budget of £333 million. The Government believe that its budget should be reduced to £328 million, a reduction of £4·4 million, or a reduction in poll tax of about 50p a week for the people living in the borough. The saving would be less than 50p a week because of poll tax reduction schemes and rebates. One is not, therefore, talking about a great deal of money.

The Department of the Environment increased Lambeth's standard spending assessment by £20 million, but the capping exercise has restricted the increase in its expenditure to £17 million. If the order is approved, Lambeth's poll tax will be reduced from £448 to £422 per person. In absolute terms, a poll tax of £448 is too high. It impoverishes the area by taking money out of the local economy. It is particularly harsh on relatively poor, elderly, single people living on their own who, as a result of the Government's machinations, pay substantially more than is paid by their affluent neighbours.

That level of poll tax leads to anti-social habits, such as evasion. When people get into the habit of evading their public duty of paying the poll tax, the habit tends to spread into other areas. My biggest argument against the poll tax is that it begins to undermine people's relationship with local government and with the state. Eventually it could lead to criminal activity. The Government had to accept that it was so destructive that they had to abolish it.

I do not believe that at this time of the year, coming up to July, it is worth while to cut the poll tax. At the very most, the effect on poll tax payers would be marginal—a reduction of 50p at the most. My experience—and I believe it to be the experience of most other hon. Members—is that there has been little lobbying against the current level of poll tax, as against the level that the Government propose. Since the effect on poll tax payers will be marginal, it seems to me to be plain crazy to alter the level of local taxation when we are at least a quarter of the way through the financial year.

The effect, however, on those who consume services—this is particularly true of education—will not be marginal. It will be both deep and severe. The effect of the capping order on the revenue that is collected by way of the poll tax will be huge. There will be irreparable losses as revised bills are sent out and as frustration over the continuously revised poll tax translates itself into non-payment. Bad debt—irrecoverable poll tax—will be the consequence of asking Lambeth to rebill and recap its rebates. It will throw the present collection system—which is beginning to work reasonably well in my borough—into confusion.

Two alternatives could have been proposed. The first is to allow councils such as Lambeth to write off their bad, irrecoverable debt without treating it as expenditure.

**Mr. Redwood:** Whew!

**Mr. Fraser:** The Minister says "Whew!". When the Government wanted to sell British Airways—when the private investor was to get his sticky hands on British Airways—what did the Government do? They wrote off bad and irrecoverable debt. If the Minister says "Whew!" like that, can he tell us whether the Government intend to write off bad and irrecoverable debt when they sell off British Coal in order to allow the private investor to get his sticky fingers on British Coal?

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Fraser:** No, because a lot of hon. Members want to speak in the debate. It would be better, therefore, if I did not give way.

When it came to selling off British Steel, did not the Government write off bad and irrecoverable debt? The same applies to Rolls-Royce. I do not know, therefore, why the Minister said "Whew!"

The right thing to do is to allow boroughs to get rid of their bad and irrecoverable debt, which is largely the result of rate penalties. When we had the rate penalty system, if a tenant moonlighted owing £1 in rent and it was written off, it counted as expenditure and the local authority lost £1·60 in grant. That was the result of central Government's interference with local government finance. Consequently, local authorities throughout the country kept the bad debt on their books. The consequence of writing it off was that it would count as expenditure and would lead to even greater penalties than the level of debt that was being written off.

The second alternative is that the Government should recognise and accept the truth about the population of the borough of Lambeth and the realities of collecting poll tax. I accuse the Government of ignoring the truth about the population of Lambeth and of ignoring the borough's ability to collect in order to stigmatise the borough. I know that not everything is perfect in Lambeth. I do not represent the borough; I represent the people of Lambeth.

Let me give an illustration of how the Government have ignored the realities. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys states that the adult population of my borough is 180,000. The first results of the 1991 census showed that Lambeth had an adult population of 179,000, or thereabouts. That is almost exactly the same as Lambeth's estimate of its own population but, without any figures to back them up, the Government say that the adult population of Lambeth liable to pay the poll tax is 189,630. They calculate that there are 10,000 more people than the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys estimates and 10,000 more than appeared on the 1991 census. With a poll tax of about £422 to £448 a year, the missing 9,000 people represent £4 million of imputed income, which is almost exactly the amount of the Government cap in the order. If the Government were to believe their own statistics, their own census and their own OPCS, we should not need to discuss the order. The Government are denying us the money because their population figures are wrong, but ours are right.

We could reduce the poll tax substantially if the Government would recognise the problems of collecting the poll tax in a borough where 40 per cent. of all public sector tenants live on the poverty line, and in which 25 per cent. of the total population live on the poverty line. The 20 per cent. rule also makes it especially difficult to collect the poll tax. If the Government recognised the difficulty of collecting the poll tax, which was the underlying reason for abolishing that tax, they would accept our figure of about 82 per cent. collection rates. If the Government were to accept our figures for the population and for the collection

rates, we could cut our poll tax by £74 per person, which is much greater than the 50p a week which will result from the order.

I conclude by giving three more reasons to oppose the order. First, as many hon. Members have said, it is undemocratic. If people are not content with the level of the poll tax or with their local services, they will have a simple solution in two years' time: they can get rid of councils with which they are not satisfied. There is growing evidence that the choices that people are making in local government elections are independent of those that they make in national elections.

I admit that the Minister spent five minutes talking to me behind the Speaker's Chair and listened to my views, but he refused to meet local government officers, a delegation from the local community, voluntary groups or churches. The police also wanted to talk to him, but he refused to meet any of those people and has overridden any local views except those of the leadership of the local council. That is wrong and it ignores the local democratic view and public opinion. After all, the results of the level of poll tax and of the conduct of our local authority led not to a backlash against Labour but to the loss of the Tory seat in Streatham only a few months ago.

Secondly, the order means a waste and a loss of revenue. It will cost about a quarter of a million pounds to rebill and to recalculate rebates in a borough which has such a high level of poverty and where there are so many rebates to be recalculated. That alone will cost about a quarter of a million pounds, but a bigger loss of revenue will come from the confusion that will result from rebilling. That will mean that millions of pounds will be lost, so the cap implies not only an explicit cut in expenditure of £4 million in the current year but serious cuts in the future as irrecoverable poll tax has to be written off as a result of the order.

The order devalues and dilutes the council's revenue for future years. That means that in the future a child or some children somewhere in my borough will not go to medical school or law school or become an artist or a creator because the amount spent on their education in my borough will have been cut as a result of the loss of revenue arising from this order. That is already happening in every London borough. The amount spent on children's education is reduced because of bad debts which were incurred before they were even born——

**Mrs. Gorman:** It is because people do not pay their rent.

**Mr. Fraser:** No, it has nothing to do with that. The hon. Lady should tell us why the amount spent on the education of a child of five in my borough should be reduced because of rent which a tenant did not pay eight years ago. Why should a child who is now four or five years old be penalised because of a debt which is now irrecoverable and which was incurred more than five years ago? That is the result of the way in which education is financed. It is also a result of the abolition of the Inner London education authority and the consequence of lumping the problems of London boroughs and their old debts together with other provisions.

The third reason to oppose the order is the cuts themselves. Lambeth had not planned to increase its spending greatly. It plans to spend an extra £4·4 million on education and an extra £1·6 million on social services. We read in the *Evening Standard* tonight that children in London are at greater risk of drug and child abuse than in any other part of the country. Lambeth also plans to spend about £50,000 extra on the disabled.

As a result of the cuts, the passport out of poverty provided by education will be curtailed to some extent because, in a borough such as Lambeth, education is the value-added element which can be added to a child's basic assets. The lives and opportunities of young people, children and the disabled will be adversely affected. I do not think that playing with people's lives is worth 50p or less a week.

8.6 pm

**Mr. Alan Howarth** (Stratford-on-Avon): I have sought to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of sad necessity. I regret very much that Warwickshire has been capped. It is not an authority which has sought to confront the Government; it is not loony or extravagant but is a well-run Conservative-controlled authority, committed to providing a proper level of services on a cost-effective basis. The quality of its management has been praised by the Audit Commission whose opinion, I believe, the Government hold in some regard.

In Warwickshire we certainly understand the need for economy in the public finances, and Warwickshire county council has not sought to impose excessive burdens on its charge payers. Indeed, the increase in its precept since the introduction of the community charge has been the ninth lowest of any county council. But Warwickshire is being capped. That is because the Government's standard spending assessment understates Warwickshire's needs.

Warwickshire's needs are certainly no less than the average. Sadly, mortgage repossessions and infant mortality are above the county council average. Household disposable income and gross domestic product per household are below the county council average. That is recognised by the Minister's colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry and by the European Community in no fewer than three different programmes. Nearly half the population of Warwickshire lives in priority areas as defined by the DTI or the European Community. In the case of the European Community, Warwickshire is eighth out of the thirty-nine English county councils with regard to the proportion of the population in objective 2 areas. However, according to the Department of the Environment's assessment of need, Warwickshire is thirty-fifth out of 39 authorities.

Why is the Department of the Environment's assessment of Warwickshire's needs so peculiar? I cannot believe that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, of all people, is lagging behind the European Commissioners in common sense and realism. The explanation is that he has inherited responsibility for a system that places excessive weight on a restricted range of indicators of need. I shall outline briefly two distortions and one confusion in this massive system.

The area cost adjustment is intended to compensate local authorities for the costs of employment in the south-east of England. We in Warwickshire submit that the new earnings survey is an inappropriate guide. A high proportion of local authority labour costs are centrally determined, and there is little real flexibility for local authorities in respect of pay—for example, in the cases of the police, of fire fighters and of teachers.

*[Mr. Alan Howarth]*

I am glad that my former colleagues in the Department of Education and Science managed to achieve a pay review body for teachers and that its recommendations have been accepted. However, if the Government will the ends, they must also will the means. It is not reasonable to require Warwickshire's education budget, already desperately stretched, to be cut in other aspects to enable the authority to honour that commitment.

There is an arbitrarily drawn frontier between the charmed area of the south-east, which benefits from the area cost adjustment, and the rest of the country. Unfortunately for us in Warwickshire, the boundary is drawn along the Oxfordshire-Warwickshire border. If we were in Oxfordshire, we should receive an extra £15·2 million, and then we would have no problems with our budget.

In different capacities I have had the opportunity to study the additional educational needs element in the formula at close quarters, and in my judgment it has two faults. The first is that the three indices of social deprivation on which it is based are too narrowly selected. In truth, additional educational needs, as defined by people of common sense, are diverse and pervade the whole school population. The weighting attached to additional educational needs in the standard spending assessment is excessive—22·5 per cent.—so that too high a proportion of resources is allocated according to socio-economic factors rather than according to pupil numbers. The result is underfunding of basic provision across the country. The cost to Warwickshire of the introduction of the additional educational needs element was £6·7 million in 1990-91.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I have been a member of the ministerial team for "Action for Cities", and I fully share the Government's commitment to finding effective ways to bring better services to people in inner cities and to improve the quality of life there. But I question—as, I suspect, does my hon. Friend—whether massive transfers of resources from the shire counties are really the right way to achieve that. In Warwickshire the effect has certainly been to take from a county which is efficiently managed but austerely financed. I have no ill will towards Birmingham—although I admire Warwickshire's concept of education service delivery rather more than that of Birmingham—but we find it galling that Birmingham city council does not even spend up to its education SSA.

**Sir Dudley Smith:** My hon. Friend is making a powerful case, as is clear when he talks about the inner cities problem, but will he ally with that case what he said earlier —that less deserving shire counties, too, are getting more than Warwickshire?

**Mr. Howarth:** My hon. Friend is taking us back to the area cost adjustment consideration, and I certainly do not disagree with him about that.

The weighting of the additional educational needs element has been somewhat reduced within the overall system. I understand the political difficulties in taking the process further, but I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment and the Department for Education should consider it further, because injustices and impracticalities are built into the formula.

The confusion which I mentioned earlier consists in the contradictory requirements of different Whitehall Departments. I mentioned teachers' pay, and I shall cite one other instance. The Home Office requires Warwickshire to spend more than it does on the fire and rescue service, whereas the DOE insists that it should spend less. The budget is £2·4 million, or 32 per cent., above its fire SSA, yet Warwickshire's expenditure remains below the minimum on which the Home Office insists. We have received stern admonition from Her Majesty's inspector and from Home Office Ministers, yet when Warwickshire attempts to meet the Home Office requirements we find ourselves capped.

I ask the Minister of State, as I have already asked my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Office, to deal with this flat contradiction which places Warwickshire councillors in an impossible position and causes my constituents to suffer. I hope that the Minister will not simply accept that there is an impasse between those two massive Departments of State.

I could say more about the technical features of the system which operates so powerfully to the detriment of Warwickshire, but the case has been strongly set out and powerfully substantiated in a two-volume submission by the county which I commend to a wider readership. The issues raised in Warwickshire's case are issues of principle, and of national concern.

If the system of SSAs is to command respect, the anomalies within it and the damage that they cause must be eradicated. It will not do to plead, as the Government did last year, the overriding need for stability—because such stability means a perpetuation of injustice.

In the meantime, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for listening to and responding to Warwickshire's case. I believe that my hon. Friend recognises that the present position is not intellectually acceptable nor politically presentable, and I know him well enough to know that he cannot be satisfied with such a state of affairs.

The £4 million increase in Warwickshire's budget permitted under the order is a significant improvement for the county. But I remind my hon. Friend that it still leaves the county £3 million short of the expenditure that a responsible Conservative-controlled county council believed was the minimum appropriate budget. Already our education and youth services have suffered severely, and the police are experiencing the greatest difficulty in providing the service which the Home Office requires, which they wish to provide and which my constituents want from them.

The charge that the council has to make for home helps has risen by 25 per cent. above the rate of inflation, and something similar has happened with meals on wheels. Charges for lunches in old people's luncheon clubs are rising by even more than that. I recently visited the Earlswood senior citizens luncheon club, where people were incensed, but also bewildered and hurt, by the 50 per cent. increase in the cost of their luncheons.

The Government have implicitly conceded the inadequacies of the SSA for Warwickshire. The cap was lifted by £2·8 million last year, and between last year and this year formula adjustments have given us another £1·3 million. Now the Government have enabled us to spend an additional £4 million. They must now follow through the implications of that analysis and those decisions.

I shall vote for the order, because I shall not vote against an increase of £4 million for my county, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to recognise the disruption, damage and distress suffered in Warwickshire last year and again this year. It would be intolerable to have to repeat that experience for yet another year. The waste of time, energy, money and emotion involved in such proceedings is deplorable, and the sheer unfairness is unacceptable. I urge the Government to embark upon a thorough review of the standard spending assessment now, in the interests of justice and of good government.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. I inform the House that no fewer than 14 hon. Members hope to catch my eye. It would appear that some of them will be disappointed, but it would be helpful if hon. Members were to bear that in mind and to make their speeches as brief as possible.

8.19 pm

**Mr. Bill Olner** (Nuneaton): I shall try to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When the Minister began to speak, there were so many Conservative interventions that I thought for a moment that I was watching a re-run of "Yes, Minister". I am sorry to see him sitting all alone on the Front Bench.

The issue that we are discussing is fundamental to the welfare of my constituents and the people of Warwickshire in general. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) spoke of the £4 million that the Government are contributing, but one could be forgiven for saying that they are contributing nothing at all. The elected members of Conservative-controlled Warwickshire county council have determined the level of service that is needed, and, although I consider their estimate far too low, they decided that £299 million was the amount required to provide that service.

That money is being collected. It began to be collected in April or May. I have received no letters from constituents saying that they are paying too much—although I have received plenty of letters from elderly people whose meals-on-wheels charges have risen by 50 per cent., and in some rural areas the service has been disbanded. Home-help charges have risen by some 25 per cent. It does the Government no good to become involved in horse trading. There is no rhyme or reason for their failure to accept the excellent document presented to them by Warwickshire county councillors, who made some good points when they arrived in a deputation attended by all Warwickshire Members.

I do not understand why the Government have relaxed their restrictions by only £4 million. I hope that all my hon. Friends representing Warwickshire will support the amendment that I have tabled with my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) because it goes back to the original principle that local democracy means elected members determining the level of service that is required, along with the people whom they represent. That is patently not happening now.

The main problem is the standard spending assessment. As others have pointed out, Warwickshire county council was poll tax capped not only this year but last year. The formula has been wrong from the beginning, and I fear that nothing will be done to correct it in future years. The Government's £4 million is no more than a relaxation.

In the past few years, Warwickshire has cut more than £13 million from its budgets. That has meant an enormous reduction in education and youth service facilities, and there is still a shortfall. Warwickshire councillors will have to exercise the wisdom of Solomon if the motion is passed; in determining that shortfall I hope that my amendment will be accepted, so that the council can set the budget that it agreed.

There is a £4·2 million shortfall in the education budget, a £1·5 million shortfall in the social services budget and a £1·4 million shortfall in the budget for transport and fire and rescue services. Those are only figures, of course, but there is more to it than that. Last week, I hoped to question the Minister for Health about the implications of the Children Act 1989; I understand that she is to receive a delegation from Warwickshire's social services department, and I trust that Warwickshire Members in particular will bear this in mind. Even with the increased funds mentioned by the Minister, the council will not have enough money to ensure that more than scant regard is paid to the implementation of the Children Act. It will be unable to move to the next stage of that implementation.

People in my area deserve better than this. Warwickshire is made up of five districts, many of which suffer from social deprivation. As has been mentioned, RECHAR money is payable in some of those districts. The county does not consist only of leafy Stratford-on-Avon, Kenilworth and Warwick; it has another side—the industrial side.

Warwickshire used to boast a thriving mining industry and a heavy engineering industry. Sadly, both those industries have been in decline for some time. It is now recognised—not only in the House but in Europe and the relevant agencies—that they need more money. The stranglehold of the standard spending assessment and all that it implies prevents my local authority from putting into practice policies that would create an additional economic stimulus.

I urge every hon. Member to vote against the motion—not because I do not welcome the £4 million, but because, if Warwickshire is to fulfil its obligations to its people, it needs the budget set by its Conservative county council. It needs £299 million.

8.26 pm

**Mr. Douglas French** (Gloucester): The House gave my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment power to charge cap authorities on one of two grounds: that their budgets are excessive, or that the increase in those budgets in relation to the previous year is excessive. In his capping notice to the city of Gloucester—which I have the honour to represent—my right hon. and learned Friend said that his ground for capping was the fact that the increase in its budget between 1991-92 and 1992-93 was excessive.

How did my right hon. and learned Friend arrive at that view? He took the proposed budget figure of £10·343 million, compared it with the revenue support grant of £9·2 million for 1991-92 and then announced that that produced an increase of 12·4 per cent., which—by his standards—is excessive.

*[Mr. Douglas French]*

I would argue that the base line figure with which my right hon. and learned Friend should compare the proposed budget is £9·7 million rather than £9·2 million. I believe that he has wrongly applied the rules that he himself set. In 1991, the boundaries of the city of Gloucester were extended, and the city took in an extra 6,000 people who had previously been in Stroud and Tewkesbury. It became Gloucester's responsibility to look after those 6,000 people, and its charge-paying population was effectively increased by 9 per cent.

I entirely accept that my right hon. and learned Friend calculated Gloucester's SSA for 1992-93 to reflect the boundary change. I do not dispute that the calculation reflects the increased population's spending needs. The SSA, however, is not the issue; the issue is the way in which the base line is calculated. The question is, where did the money come from to provide services for those 6,000 people in 1991-92, the year in which the transfer took place?

It would have been possible for the Department to increase the council's revenue support grant. There was time for it to do that, but it did not. Had that been done, the present argument would not have arisen: the base line expenditure figure would have been unambiguously £9·7 million. Instead, the districts agreed on an inter-district transfer of £510,000 to Gloucester, which was designed to cover the spending requirements of those 6,000 people.

That transfer was made with the full approval of the Secretary of State and in accordance with the guidelines set down by him. For all practical purposes, therefore, this was revenue support grant, but it was received indirectly, via another council. If it had been retained by the council from which it came, it would have been treated as revenue support grant. So it was not extra expenditure in any sense. It was money spent by Gloucester that would otherwise have been spent by Stroud and Tewkesbury, and would, of course, have been included in those authorities' base-line calculations.

To Gloucester's original budget of £9·2 million was added £510,000, making £9·7 million in all—but with one difference: under the rules, the amount was paid into the council's general fund and had to be treated as "other income". The result was that the section 95(4) calculation, which is used by the Secretary of State in his year-on-year comparisons, was artificially reduced by £510,000. If the money representing the rate support grant had been treated as rate support grant, the council's section 95(4) calculation base line would have been £9·7 million.

So the question is "What was the amount of money spent by Gloucester in 1991-92?" because that is the yardstick for judging whether the 1992-93 expenditure is or is not excessive. Was it the original figure of £9·2 million, before any population transfer took place? My right hon. and learned Friend thinks that it was. He takes £9·2 million as the base line and argues that a proposed budget of £10·343 million represents an increase of 12·4 per cent. That breaches his guidelines and therefore triggers the cap.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I agree on one thing: the figure of £9·2 million is the one that would have been correct if no population had been transferred; there is no doubt about that. My right hon. and learned Friend believes, however, that the same figure was correct as a base line even after population change funds had been transferred and spent. In my opinion, that is illogical, unfair and absurd. It is absurd to take the same base-line figure for two different sets of circumstances.

I shall not invite my hon. Friend the Minister to consider where my right hon. and learned Friend's methodology would lead if, instead of the population increase being 9 per cent., it had been 99 per cent. Would he then stick to his unadjusted base-line system? That simple illustration shows that there is a flaw in my right hon. and learned Friend's approach.

Is it not common sense that, because the £510,000 was transferred in respect of the 6,000 people, it should be deemed to be a legitimate addition to Gloucester council's 1991-92 budget? Gloucester did not spend £9·2 million in that year; it spent £9·7 million, with the Secretary of State's approval. It seems reasonable, therefore, that it should be able to apply a 6·5 per cent. increase to the £9·7 million and propose a budget of £10·343 million.

That seems reasonable now and it seemed reasonable when the council did it. But the city of Gloucester took no chances. It took vigorous steps to discover the Secretary of State's views in respect of the effect of boundary changes on budgets. The council wrote to the Department several times seeking clarification. In a letter about charge capping dated 17 December, the Department replied:

"As far as the Secretary of State's intentions for charge capping for 1992/93 are concerned you will be aware that the paper circulated to all local authorities on 26 November . . . stated that 'the Secretary of State . . . intends to consider the effects of boundary changes on authorities' budgets for 1991/92 and 1992/93.' That remains the position."

The letter continued, with respect to capping:

"As the Secretary of State made clear in his statement to the House of Commons on 26 November, his intentions are at present firm but necessarily provisional."

That is not exactly a model of clarity, but one accepts that obfuscation is sometimes a necessary instrument of Government.

Admittedly, that letter does not say that the Secretary of State intends to make full allowances for the boundary changes, but it emphatically does not say that he intends to make no allowances for them whatever.

In the event, the letter of 17 December was not sent to Gloucester city council until 11 March. With it came a covering letter, which said:

"This letter"—

meaning the letter of 17 December—

"actually from this office"—

one wonders where else it might come from—

"appears never to have been sent. I therefore enclose a copy, with apologies for this oversight."

By 11 March, the Department must have known that the budget-making process was not only well advanced but probably already accomplished. Whatever grounds for lack of clarity there may have been in November and December, the time for a clear decision had surely arrived by the middle of March. If it was the intention to treat the budget as if no population change had ever been made, it was time to say so, but the opportunity was not taken. I submit that the covering letter could and should have said that the Secretary of State had decided that no account would be taken of the money spent in respect of the additional population. It did not do so, even though the writer of the letter must have known that that was the information that Gloucester city council would need to know. Nor did the author of the letter show any sign of

appreciating that there would come a point—in fact, that, there had come a point at that stage—at which further failure to set a budget would become an offence.

I submit that, if a clear and unequivocal statement had been made, at that time or earlier, to the effect that the £510,000 that had been spent must be treated as if it had not been spent, we would not be discussing this subject tonight, because Gloucester would have followed the instructions that it had been given. Members and officers of Gloucester city council from all parties believed that they were acting in accordance with the rules set down by the Secretary of State. One of the things on which we have cross-party agreement on Gloucester city council is that there was no intention to breach the capping guidelines. Indeed, there is abundant evidence in council correspondence and council minutes that the council had no intention whatever of breaching the rules. It was the council's wish and intention to keep within them. Why else would the council have had lengthy debates to that end? The council was debating not by how much it should seek to breach the guidelines but how to trim its budget to ensure that it was within the guidelines and did not run the risk of being capped. That is in keeping with the tradition of a prudent authority, which is what Gloucester has been. It has not been profligate or irresponsible. One may sometimes argue about the particular headings of expenditure priorities that it chooses, but, overall, it is a prudent authority.

It was not until the council received the notice of designation on 14 May 1992 that it became aware that the Secretary of State had not taken account at all of the boundary changes. What became evident then was that, on the Secretary of State's offbeat and eccentric method of calculation, Gloucester had breached the capping guidelines. It is not simply my view or that of Gloucester city council that the method is offbeat and eccentric. Section 55 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 refers to the designation of authorities from 1993 onwards making specific provision for including in budget comparisons an amount to recognise boundary changes. Parliament has clearly recognised that year-on-year comparisons of budgets which do not take into account boundary changes may well be unfair.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities for listening to representations from Gloucester city council. However, I repeat to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Minister that the city council has not been profligate. It is committed to economy and efficiency. The amount by which its proposed budget exceeds the SSA is less than 117 other district councils, many of which are spending considerably above their SSAs. However, they remain within the year-on-year yardstick and are therefore not caught by the provision.

Furthermore, the amount in question is £190,000 or £3 per head of population. Subject to the precise re-billing arrangements, the reduction in budget is likely to approach £300,000. To insist on a cap of £10·15 million in those circumstances is not a sound illustration of how to treat charge payers' money responsibly. It will disrupt the city's financial management and confer a stigma on the council marking it as irresponsible. It is also likely to prejudice the council's case for unitary status. I regard the cap as entirely unacceptable.

While I thank Ministers for listening courteously to my representations, and those of councillors, I record my profound dissatisfaction with the fact that Ministers have not been persuaded by our arguments. Therefore, I regret that I cannot support the Government in the Lobbies tonight.

8.41 pm

**Mr. Nigel Jones** (Cheltenham): Snap: we in Cheltenham have exactly the same problem as that in the constituency of the hon. Member for Gloucester (Mr. French). I thank him for setting out his case so clearly and I will not bore the House by describing the experiences of Cheltenham borough council.

Cheltenham council has also kept to the SSA, but we have suffered a larger boundary change than that in Gloucester. An extra 20 per cent. has been added to our boundary. The good people of Leckhampton, Up Hatherley, The Reddings, Prestbury and Swindon village have been added to the responsibilities of the borough council. There was a similar transfer of funds from Tewkesbury to deal with that change last year. We have no quarrel with the Minister over the SSA. We are being capped on the year-on-year comparison of spending in exactly the same way as Gloucester.

By setting a budget to stay within the cap, much of the routine maintenance will be capitalised, thus removing it from the revenue budget. As a result, the town centre toilets will close. It will therefore be a very inconvenient place to be when the pubs close. Senior citizens' bus passes will be means-tested. I know of no one who fought for a place on Cheltenham borough council who placed such changes in their manifestos. However, the council must adopt such measures to save small amounts of money to get down to the capping limit.

I join the hon. Member for Gloucester in appealing to the Minister to reconsider the position in Gloucester and Cheltenham. If we consider all the councils that were brought under the capping threshold with budgets of less than £15 million, only Cheltenham and Gloucester have had boundary change problems. That bodes ill for the local government review. Those examples may make councils anxious that boundary changes might lead to their being capped in future.

I would like to pay the Minister a small tribute. I have been double-capped: Cheltenham borough council and Gloucestershire county council have both been capped. I took a delegation from Gloucestershire to meet the Minister. Hon. Members may recall that when the original capping legislation was announced by the Secretary of State on 14 May I asked him whether he would be genuinely open to persuasion by the councils affected and he said that he would be. I thank the Minister for being open with us. We believe that we had a fair hearing when we met him.

Gloucestershire had a powerful case which was made clearly by senior council members Frank Thompson and John Sewell, the chief executive Michael Honey and the county treasurer Richard Cockcroft. I thank the Minister for being genuinely open to the Gloucestershire appeal. I also thank him for the relaxation of the cap by £2·59 million.

I met senior officers and members of the council in Gloucester yesterday. Although there was no sense of euphoria, there was a feeling that the Minister had listened and they were grateful for that. It must have had some effect on them, because I am pleased to report that when

*[Mr. Nigel Jones]*

I attended the annual cricket match between Gloucester county council and Somerset county council, we won by 26 runs.

The question centres on the formula for calculating the SSA. Many of the calculations in the formula are based on the 1981 census. However, there have been great changes since then. There has been an increase in Gloucestershire in post-16 stay-on rates in our schools. That is remarkable and I am sure that the Government, like me, welcome that. We have also been very successful in statementing special educational needs. We have made great progress in that respect and some of our less fortunate children can now make more progress than they would otherwise.

Gloucestershire also now has a higher unemployment rate because of the rundown of defence needs following the end of the cold war. Although we all welcome the end of the cold war, we must find a new role for those people in the county who have been made unemployed as a result of that welcome move. There has been a 43 per cent. increase in free school meals in Gloucestershire and that costs money. The population in Gloucestershire has also been growing since 1981. Indeed, Gloucestershire was one of the boom counties of the 1980s.

The cuts which the county council had considered before the £2·59 million adjustment to the cap involved compulsory redundancies for teachers. We are reconsidering that to discover whether compulsory redundancies are now necessary. However, when I spoke to senior officers yesterday, they said that there would still have to be some compulsory redundancies. At one stage, it seemed that up to 200 jobs would be lost, although not all compulsorily and certainly not all full-time jobs. However, I know of no county councillor who was elected on the basis of a programme of making teachers redundant. I know of no school governor—and I am a governor of three schools in Cheltenham—who believes that making teachers redundant is a good idea.

The chief constable has also warned that 15 police posts would have to be held vacant despite the fact that since 1979 we have had a 237 per cent. increase in crime. Indeed, there was a 32 per cent. increase—the third highest in the country—in 1991 alone.

Gloucestershire is a low spending authority. We spend less per head than the neighbouring counties of Warwickshire, Avon and Wiltshire and slightly more than Hereford and Worcester. We are way down the shire county average in respect of education spending.

During the formation of the budget and, indeed, during the general election, no one contacted me to complain about the level of the poll tax, but I was bombarded with letters from parents, elderly people and people who have no direct interest in education except they knew we should not make cuts. They all wanted us to maintain spending on education in Gloucestershire. They understood the argument because Gloucestershire has been forthcoming in passing the education budget to schools so that school governors have had to cope with their own budgets. They would have an informed debate not only among themselves but among parents and other people in the community.

At every public meeting that I held during the general election, I asked people whether they wanted us to cut spending on education, and they said no. I gave them the other side of the argument, that if they wanted to maintain spending on education and on the police they must be prepared to pay for it. When I asked, "Are you prepared to pay for it?" without exception they said yes.

The difference between the new cap and the budget which the county council would like to spend is 5p a day for the standard poll tax payer or 1p a day for those on the 20 per cent. rate. The cost of rebilling throughout Cheltenham, Gloucester and the county council area might be up to £1 million. That is a waste of money. I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify whether the relaxation that has been announced for the three councils will raise their SSAs or allow higher spending this year. If it does not raise their SSAs, there will be significant problems next year.

I am not alone in questioning the principle of capping. Last week, I asked whether the Minister thought capping increased local accountability. It takes from elected councillors the right to carry out the programmes on which they were elected and it denies the people who elected them the high quality services for which they voted.

8.51 pm

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I shall be brief, because my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) made an effective speech outlining the situation regarding Hillingdon. Some would say that this charade is a dog's breakfast, but no dog in Hillingdon would eat such a mess as that which is provided by the Minister and his colleagues in the Department. For year after year, the nonsense coming out of the Department of the Environment with regard to local authorities has got worse. It is as bad as it could ever be.

The poll tax—the community charge—was to give local democracy a chance to work; if local authorities taxed highly, they would be turned out of office by the electorate. That is an excellent principle, and I voted for it. When we saw charge capping, which is contrary to that principle, it was said that it would give people the freedom to elect high-spending authorities or low-spending authorities. The minute some high-spending authorities came in, and we could have seen a change, what happened? The Government said, "We cannot have that. We will go against the principle on which we introduced the community charge, and introduce capping." That is the issue that we are discussing. The principle was right, but the implementation was worse than a dog's breakfast, and capping just makes nonsense of the situation.

Labour and Conservative Governments have continued to put statutory obligations on local authorities and then deny them the resources to meet those obligations. In Hillingdon, which is a port authority, we have homeless families coming in. We now have refugee kids. Although the Government have told us that we have to let them in, it is their responsibility. They say, "Hang on, Jack. We are telling you that you have to house them, but we are not allowing you to find the money to do it properly. We are not accepting our national responsibility."

One thing that I recommend to my authority, and I did so 14 years ago, is that the next refugee kids who come in should be dumped in Folkestone and Wokingham. Let the local authorities in the areas in which the Minister and the Secretary of State reside see how they cope when they have to put their hands into their pockets to feed, clothe and house those refugee kids. I am serious about this matter.

If the Government will not listen to reason and recognise the justice of our case, we will, unfortunately, have to take some action to make them aware. If we dump them in Wokingham in a couple of weeks and leave them outside the town hall, the Minister responsible will say, "This is a local responsibility, not a national responsibility. Although the Government control who comes into the country, you will understand why you should have them and bear your share." It is reasonable for the Minister to consider that point. If we do not do something drastic, the Government will go on only listening. I respect my hon. Friend the Minister for listening, but what is the point of listening and accepting the argument and then doing damn all about it afterwards? There is no point whatsoever.

My authority, Hillingdon, budgeted to cope with that national problem locally. It did as it was told. It raised money through local resources and then set it aside. That was not good enough for the Government. They said, "You have to find it locally; it is a local responsibility," although we thought that it was a national one. The minute we found the money and put it aside they said, "Oh no, no; we are going to cap you." We lose at both ends. It is like being stuck in the middle of the channel tunnel with a cork in each end. We cannot win.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge has said, my local authority has done everything that the Government have wanted from it from day one in May 1990. It has made savings of £30 million and reduced staff by 1,400. It has acted faster than any other local authority in respect of grant-maintained status for schools. What do we get? We get one big kick up the backside from the Government for doing so. Is it any wonder that my Tory colleagues on Hillingdon council say, "Why the hell do we bother"?

As my hon. Friend said, the public sector borrowing requirement is £28 billion. The Government have the audacity to say to Hillingdon, "You are £800,000 over the top." It is the Government's concern, but we are blamed for it. What sort of example is that? How can I say to my council colleagues, "Listen to the Government; theirs is the right advice on local issues; you must do as they say because they know best"? Know best? Like hell.

I have always said that perhaps we should get rid of the Foreign Office, because the Foreign Office acts in British interests only if they coincide with those of the Foreign Office. I have also said that, because the Treasury does not understand the difference between capital and revenue spending and abuses local authorities because of that, we should get rid of it. I have now arrived at the point at which I think that the Department of the Environment should join them. We should get rid of the three to start with—there will not be much left by the time I have finished. There is no logic in what the Government are doing with regard to local authorities.

My hon. Friend the Minister has said that he is a friend of local government and that he wants to continue as such. I have my doubts whether the Government really want local authorities to continue effectively and acceptably. I speak as somebody who has had nearly 14 years' experience as a local authority member. If we do not want to give local authorities the resources to do their job, and if local government legislation costs them money to meet their responsibilities, we should do away with local government altogether. Let us be honest about it. Do not let people become elected and work their whatsits off locally to make the right decisions and then slap a cap on them and say, "It is for the benefit of this country." That is the biggest load of rubbish that any hon. Member could have to listen to. I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that he will not get me in the Lobby with him tonight.

8.57 pm

**Mr. John Austin-Walker** (Woolwich): In the previous debate the Under-Secretary of State for Wales stressed the importance of decisions being based on up-to-date information. The evidence that was presented by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) shows that decisions on standard spending assessments and capping have not been based on the most up-to-date information available.

Other hon. Members praised the Minister for having listened to the representations made by the various local authorities. He certainly gave the impression of listening when the London borough of Greenwich met him. But what has come out since has shown that he heard and understood nothing that was said about the way in which the SSAs were essentially flawed.

When the Government considered the implementation of SSAs they had a series of options. One would have given Hackney, for example, a poll tax of £48. An alternative option would have given it a poll tax of £606. I give that as an illustration of the arbitrary nature of SSAs. They are crucial to the decisions that are made. If the SSA for a particular service overestimates the required spending, the council is effectively overpaid. But if the SSA underestimates the required spending, as in the case of the London borough of Greenwich, the inevitable result is that services are cut or the poll tax is considerably increased. In the case of Greenwich, both have occurred.

Let me compare what has happened in Greenwich with what has happened in Westminster. The Government say that SSAs are a fair assessment of what a local authority needs to spend to provide a reasonable level of service. The "other services" block of the SSA for Westminster assumes that the cost of those services will be six times the cost of the same services in Havering, and three and a half times the cost in Croydon.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy statistics show that Westminster's actual expenditure on "other services" was twice, not six times, that of Havering and twice, not three and a half times, that of Croydon. I put it to the House that the difference between Westminster's SSA for "other services" and its actual expenditure represents a gift to the poll tax payers of Westminster of £301·17 each. If such a gift were given to the poll tax payers of the London borough of Greenwich we might have a negative poll tax. Or if the safety nets were removed we would have a poll tax of no more than half the current amount.

Ministers have argued consistently that Greenwich is not an inner-London borough with inner-London characteristics but an outer-London borough with outer-London characteristics. I say again to the House that that is based on misleading, outdated information. All the current information contradicts that argument. Ministers also suggest that the council is extravagant and top heavy. Yet in his recent management letter the district auditor said that only four London authorities had a lower ratio of central support staff to total staff.

Greenwich's problem is the basic inadequacy and unfairness of the SSAs. Will the Minister explain one thing to the House? There are various principles on which the

*[Mr. John Austin-Walker]*

capping regime may be brought into play. I understand that if the SSA of the London borough of Greenwich was only £1·87 million higher—far less than many of us believe that it should be—the expenditure limit would be £4·1 million higher. I ask the Minister to explain that and, if he can do so, to justify it to the House and the poll tax payers of Greenwich.

The social factors on which the SSA for Greenwich is based assume that Greenwich is a borough which is not in particular need and has outer-London characteristics. The Woolwich Arsenal ward of my constituency has the highest level of unemployment in London. I represent a constituency and borough in which the three wards around the town centre are among the 10 most deprived wards in London. Yet we have a significantly lower SSA than that of boroughs such as Wandsworth.

Let us compare the social needs in Wandsworth and Greenwich. The homelessness figures for 1990 show that in Greenwich 16·4 people per thousand population are homeless. In Wandsworth the figure is 13·9. The level of residence-based unemployment is higher in Greenwich than in Wandsworth. The number of long-term claimants in Greenwich is higher than that in Wandsworth. The number of 18 to 24-year-old claimants is higher in Greenwich than in Wandsworth.

The average earnings survey was mentioned. It is relevant when determining the social needs of the boroughs and areas that we represent. According to the new earnings survey, average earnings in Greenwich are £78 per week lower than the Greater London average. The percentage of employees earning less than £200 a week is higher in Greenwich than in Wandsworth, as is the percentage of employees earning less than £270 per week. Yet the difference between the standard spending assessments of Greenwich and Wandsworth is enormous. I shall focus on children's services, where we find the greatest disparity between the Government's assessment of the amount that Greenwich needs to spend and its expenditure. Greenwich spends £22 million on children's social services, which is 50 per cent. above its SSA. I believe that that is the largest gap between SSA and actual spend of any authority.

I shall again compare Greenwich and Wandsworth. The Government's SSA for children at risk in Greenwich is £253, and it is £332 for Wandsworth. The social index figure for children in Greenwich is £39 and is £209 for Wandsworth. The Government work on the basis that Greenwich has the lowest assessment for children at risk of any inner-London borough. The reality of the figures shows that Greenwich has the highest infant mortality rate in inner London; it has the second highest figure for placement of safety orders; it has the third highest number of children on the child protection register and, it has the fourth highest number of under-fives in care.

I know that Ministers have sometimes said that Greenwich could set a lower poll tax if it spent at the same level as its neighbouring authorities. That may be true if we consider such neighbouring authorities as Bexley. If one asked the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) How many day nurseries are provided for the under-fives in his constituency by the London borough of Bexley, the answer would be, "None." if one asked the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) how many were provided in his constituency, the answer would be, "None." If one asked the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) the same question, the answer would be, "One." One day nursery for the entire borough of Bexley.

In Greenwich we do not believe that that is an adequate level of provision for our under-fives. I was struck by the statement yesterday by the Under-Secretary of State for Education. He claimed credit for provision for under-fives and said that that was important in terms not only of nursery education but of the Government's record in providing day care for the under-fives. That day care is provided by Labour local authorities in areas of acute social need, such as Greenwich—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] It is all very well for Conservative Members to say that.

When the Minister sums up, will he explain the disparity between the SSA for Greenwich and its expenditure? Will he tell the House how Greenwich can bridge that gap? It could not be done without decimating social services, where the largest gap occurs.

There is also a disparity between the treatment of Greenwich and Wandsworth as regards education. When the Government produced figures for relative grants to local authorities they said that Greenwich received £690 per adult for education, whereas Wandsworth received £536, as if we were being treated better in Greenwich than those in Wandsworth. Those were the cash figures per adult, but Greenwich has the highest school-age population of any inner London borough. For the record, I shall give the figures if we take the children into account: for primary schools, £2,377 in Greenwich and £2,562 in Wandsworth; and in secondary education, £3,480 in Greenwich and £3,756 in Wandsworth. Those are the real figures, which have an impact upon the service level which the local authority is able to provide.

On 14 May, on the BBC "Nine O'Clock News", the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"It's very difficult to get a formula that pleases everyone".

I agree with him, and I also agree with the leader of the Conservative group on Greenwich borough council, Councillor Peter King. Of the SSA formula, he said:

"It treats some authorities badly, it treats Greenwich very badly. To some extent the SSA formula is mathematical modelling gone mad."

The SSA formula is inadequate for the distribution of grants, and it is ludicrous for determining the expenditure of local authorities.

9.10 pm

**Mr. Roy Thomason** (Bromsgrove): I shall be brief as I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak.

As the former chairman of the Association of District Councils, it is natural that I should believe in the independence of local government. Within the functions delegated to it, it should be free to settle policies and to execute them. As I understand it, that is the principle of subsidiarity on which we talk so much in other debates. It means the delegation of decisions to the levels closest to those affected by those decisions, so far as that is practicable..

A second and more important principle determines that local government must act within the parameters set by the Government acting through Parliament. Sovereignty rests here as the democratic institution of the nation as a whole, including its Executive. We allow treaties to be made on

our behalf relating to European institutions. In that way, we pass some sovereignty to them. Likewise, we delegate functions to local government.

Local government has no divine right to govern its own communities. Its powers stem entirely from the Government acting through Parliament who must determine the national interest. One such item of national interest that must be determined is the levels of public expenditure. Local government is responsible for the expenditure of £60 billion per annum. The effect of that on inflation, the rates of interest and other levels of economic policy can never be ignored by any Government of any political colour. How can some Opposition Members object to monetary control passing to Europe and, at the same time, support it being passed to town halls? The truth is that sovereignty must always be vested in and controlled by the elected body of the nation as a whole.

Capping is based on SSAs and criticisms of them are bound to be made—hon. Members have advanced such powerful cases today. However, I can remember criticisms being levelled at the grant distribution formula of the past generation—grant-related expenditure. The way in which it passed money to local government was absolutely horrific. We all rightly complained about it. That system depended on 64 different formulae, but the present grant distribution mechanism is based on six principal formulae. It is much simpler and, therefore, much easier to understand.

Hon. Members are right to say that we must be balanced between simplicity and equity.

**Dr. Lynne Jones** (Birmingham, Selly Oak): If the system is so simple, can the hon. Gentleman explain why, in Birmingham, the SSA for capital financing is £60 million when actual expenditure, which is based on historical spending, is £165 million? Where is the sense in that?

**Mr. Thomason:** The answer is that, historically, Birmingham city council has chosen to spend large sums of capital moneys. That decision was made by the democratically elected councillors of Birmingham and I defend their right to do it. Equally, they must accept the constraints imposed upon them by Government, which are in the interests of the nation as a whole.

I have heard the arguments of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in Warwickshire and Hillingdon —my hon. Friends, the Members for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). They were right to raise their concerns, but the expenditure—and this has been accepted by Labour Members—by which those authorities exceed their cap limit is very small. Opposition Members say that, if it is so small, we should not bother about it at all. If it is less than £1 million—a tiny part of Hillingdon's budget of £167 million, or Warwickshire's budget of £299 million —why bother about it at all? We must bother about limits because they must be set at some point. We need them to deal with councils like Lambeth, which was represented in the debate earlier by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), who is no longer in his place. He was arguing strongly for substantial additional expenditure in Lambeth and saying that we should write off that authority's past inability to collect the community charge. That would invite non-payment and is an extraodinary position to take.

The House must acknowledge that some 6·5 million payers of community charge pay an average of £99 per annum less than they would have done if capping had not been introduced. There is a need to impose national criteria because, unfortunately, some people in local government are prepared to act irresponsibly. It is sad that it is necessary, but we require it.

Although appeals have been successfully made by Basildon, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, limits still need to be imposed on authorities to retain that control and ensure that some of the wild men and women representing local government—I am glad to say that they are very few—are not given the opportunity of throwing the national economy off course.

I support the proposals.

9.16 pm

**Mr. Nick Raynsford** (Greenwich): I enjoy the opportunity of speaking after the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), who has at least given some relief to the Government. His speech was out of keeping with all the previous contributions by hon. Members directly involved in local authorities that have been subject to capping, who have seen the unfairness and unsatisfactory nature of the process. We have heard a litany of complaints from hon. Members far better placed, because of their knowledge of local factors, to see how badly that system operates. The complaints span the political spectrum and, sadly, they have met with a stony-faced response from Ministers.

Those of us who represent the London borough of Greenwich have three principal reasons for believing that the Government's approach is wrong. First, the clear evidence of need in the area has been spelt out eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), so I need not repeat it. Those needs are not being adequately met because the authority's expenditure has been capped repeatedly in recent years, forcing a series of cuts in its budget. The Minister talked glibly about dire warnings of cuts that had not been borne out in reality. Clearly he is far removed from what is actually happening. In Greenwich in recent years there have been forced closures of two day centres for the handicapped and two holiday hotels for the elderly, which were hugely popular and about which I have received many complaints from elderly people who enjoyed their holidays in them and no longer have that facility. Seven lunch clubs, three day clubs for the elderly, two day centres for the handicapped, three day nurseries, three branch libraries and two swimming pools have also been closed. Those are just some of the services that have had to be cut as a consequence of the Government believing that they know best and imposing cuts from the centre against the wishes of local electorates and democratically elected local councils.

The second complaint is over the unfairness of the standard spending assessment formula. Again, my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich spelt that out, as did the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) in an earlier intervention. It is significant that, across the political divide, hon. Members representing the borough of Greenwich all believe that the SSA formula is unfair and adversely affects the borough. I shall not go into detail, but I shall give two specific illustrations. In the social services, the children element is grotesquely inappropriate for an

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authority with a high incidence of need that is reflected in a variety of ways. The standard spending assessment allows just £39 per child on the children needs index, compared with that of Lewisham—the next lowest placed inner London borough—which has £155 per child. The borough of Wandsworth has £208 per child and Westminster has £252.

It is significant that if Greenwich children's social index was raised to the level of the next lowest inner London borough, Lewisham, the SSA in Greenwich would be increased by £6·7 million—an amount close to the effect of the cap in reducing the budget that the council now proposes.

The second illustration is in respect of education. I have had a series of meetings with head teachers and parents who are deeply concerned about the impact of budget cuts on the quality of education and schooling in Greenwich. The formula penalises an authority that has a significantly rising school roll at both primary and secondary levels. The Greenwich school population is rising by about 4 per cent. per annum.

The formula is based on the school rolls in January of the preceding financial year and fails to take account of the impact of recent increases. If the formula were based on current school rolls in Greenwich rather than the previous date, the result would be to increase the SSA in Greenwich by £7·4 million—an amount almost in line with the difference between the capping figure and the authority's own budget.

If only one of those two factors were accepted, Greenwich would no longer be subject to capping and could agree and implement a budget, thus avoiding the devastating consequences of capping.

Our third complaint is specific to the issue of refugees. I raised the subject in an earlier intervention but did not receive an adequate response from the Minister, who I am glad to see has returned to the Chamber. A delegation from Greenwich came to see him last week and forcefully stressed the additional social service and education costs faced by the London borough of Greenwich and other authorities—whose representatives have been vociferous in today's debate—due to recent arrivals of significant numbers of refugees from many parts of the world. I am thinking particularly of refugees coming from Vietnam via Hong Kong, and from Somalia and Eritrea.

The costs that the authority has to incur are not reflected in the SSA. That point was put to the Minister, but he denied it. The Minister strongly assured the delegation that the SSA would reflect those additional costs. We challenged him and I have subsequently taken further advice from the Library. It is clear that the view that the Minister expressed to the delegation last week was wrong.

If the Minister advised the Secretary of State on a capping figure based on the advice that he gave us last week, he will have misled the Secretary of State and the Greenwich capping figure will have been wrongly calculated. Therefore, I invite him to reconsider the matter. The mistake is clear to me from the advice that I received from the Library, and from the advice that the Minister's officials have given to him and placed in the Library. The advice is as follows:

"There is a time lag between the arrival of asylum seekers and their inclusion in the data on which SSAs are based."

I invite the Minister to recognise that he was wrong last week and the unfair formula will adversely affect Greenwich and other authorities with a significant number of recently arrived refugees. If he does not, he will have offered advice on the imposition of a cap based on erroneous information, which will be unjust to the people of Greenwich.

We see a sad and sorry picture of the imposition of centralised diktats by Ministers who cannot possibly understand the intricacies and detailed implications for local communities of what they are doing. They are imposing the diktats out of ideological conviction. However, as the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said in his elegant speech, the Ministers do not apply the same logic to the Department's spending. Their actions are causing much hardship and misfortune in local communities. That is unjust and should be deeply regretted. I shall certainly vote against the order tonight.

9.24 pm

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): The Opposition are a rum lot. The man in the street would characterise their attitude to public spending as, "Give 'em the money", because Labour always behaves as if money grows on trees and will appear on command. If Labour were asked to characterise my party's attitude to public spending it would say that we were like a Scotsman with his pockets sewn up. All that Labour can do is gripe when the Government announce a relaxation for some people in the community charge. That shows Labour's muddled attitude to public spending.

The Opposition have always made a muck of local government spending. I represent people who had the misfortune a short time ago to have their local affairs conducted by a Labour-controlled Basildon council. Year after year, they were subjected to massive increases in the community charge. Ours was one of the worst areas in the country, and last year compared with this we overspent by about 100 per cent. Our SSA was £22 million, but the council chose to spend £27 million and that could not be allowed to continue. Fortunately, the citizens of Billericay and Basildon saw through that and swept Labour from office. There was a 61 per cent. turnout and a massive swing of 15 seats. We wiped the floor with Labour.

The Conservative councillors are perfectly willing to conform to the Government's spending requirements in a full year, but by the time the new budget is in place the council will be six months behind a normal year's spending. When Labour was in control it set the budget for March, but we were not able to put our new budget into effect until July, and it cannot be implemented in time to make the savings that the Government rightly require in a full year. The new Basildon councillors are committed to that target and the Government, rightly and sensibly, have given us a respite to allow us to conduct the affairs of the council properly and to provide the necessary local services within a target that can be met by local people.

We are grateful to the Government for recognising the plight of Basildon's ratepayers. The cap will allow a reduction from the extremely high figure of £361—one of the worst in the country. It can be reduced by £41 and that will be gratefully received by the people in the area.

There have been adverse comments about the behaviour of the councillors who have taken over. Hon. Members have spoken about the notorious Towngate

theatre. It could have carried out its commitments and obligations until the end of July, but the committee running it chose to close it and cause some inconvenience. That was quite unnecessary. There was absolutely no need for the remarks by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). The hon. Gentleman chose not to say that the Billericay and Whitford parts of the constituency were deprived of such facilities for years because the Labour council running Basildon did not think it worth while to pander to the Conservative majority of voters in that part of my constituency. It deliberately deprived Conservative areas and we raised the necessary money to provide our own theatre and arts facilities. Labour councillors even deprived us of premises, but now they have got their come-uppance—and about time too.

An enormous debt has been inherited. Debt charges are £7 million, a third of the standard spending assessment. It is an enormous sum to have to find. It will take time to reduce the debt charges. The previous Labour council left our financial affairs in a dreadful mess. The Conservative party is now in office and it can examine what went on. It is clear that there is a great deal to do and a massive amount of waste to eradicate. If that is to be done humanely, we shall need more time to get ourselves on our feet.

The previous Labour council left us with seven mini-council area offices. They were completely unnecessary and merely duplicated work. In closing them, we have, unfortunately, to make redundancies, which must be funded. That is another great expense which the Conservative council has had to meet.

The Government have done the right thing by introducing a little relaxation to enable the council to get on its feet. They have done the right and proper thing by the council and, as I have said, it intends to meet the targets. Some extremely gratuitous remarks have been made about the splendid Conservative leader of the new council, Mr. Tony Archer. He is doing an excellent job. He has committed himself and the new Conservative council to maintain a high standard of public services and to provide them economically by applying Conservative standards and contracting out. He will adopt the principle of ensuring that every penny counts so that those who have to pay the community charge receive good services at a price that they can reasonably afford. In other words, there will be value for money.

I commend the Government for what they have done. They have made a splendid effort. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and I are extremely grateful.

9.32 pm

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) must have been fast asleep during the debate. Of the six Conservative Back-Bench Members who have contributed to the debate, four denounced or criticised the Government for bringing forward the order. It seems that the hon. Lady does not recognise that sort of attitude.

It has been demonstrated by the House on more than one occasion that the poll tax is all wrong. It has been demonstrated again this evening that poll tax capping is all wrong. It is unfair and undemocratic and causes local authorities to cut services. When we were discussing the Bill that introduced poll tax capping, the right hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who is now the Secretary of State for the Environment, said that capping

"is not a measure to be used as a matter of course . . . it is important that there should be such a reserve power . . . to protect the charge payers . . . against extreme cases of extravagant and irresponsible local authorities."—[*Official Report*, 25 April, 1988; Vol. 132, c. 51.]

We have learnt this evening that if a local authority is spending £5 per head per year more than the Secretary of State feels that it should be spending, he will apply the capping mechanism. In Gloucester, expenditure is only £3 per head per year over the SSA, but the right hon. and learned Gentlemen is applying the capping procedure, notwithstanding that he said in 1988 that it was a "reserve power". That demonstrates the difference between the meaning of those words in 1988 and the application of the power in 1991 and now in 1992.

How misleading and hypocritical the Government are when they talk about accountability and the principle of giving freedom to people and allowing them to decide for themselves. On 5 March 1990 the former Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley, said:

"Should a Government stop councils from overspending or should people who elect councils stop them? I think it should be the latter."

Nicholas Ridley was advocating freedom for individuals through the ballot box. How does freedom for people to decide the outcome of the work and efforts of local authorities feature in the Prime Minister's citizens charter? How can the Minister say that Nicholas Ridley was wrong in March 1990?

Hon. Members with Warwickshire constituencies have said, both in their speeches and in interventions during the debate, that no one in Warwickshire has said that he is in favour of his local authority being capped. Where is the freedom for the people of Warwickshire to decide what the level of expenditure should be in their local authority area?

When the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason) was the Conservative leader of the Association of District Councils he expressed shock at the decision to apply the capping procedure to small district councils. He said:

"I am shocked that the Government should so attack many of its own supporters in local government, particularly district councils which have raided their balances to keep charge levels down this year and maintained services. It is also shocking that the Environment Secretary should completely ignore all the assurances previous Ministers gave when the capping provisions were introduced that low spending authorities would be excluded from the controls."

What a somersault the hon. Member for Bromsgrove has done since he became a Member of Parliament. How many people would have thought 12 months ago, when the leader of the ADC, who is now the hon. Member for Bromsgrove, expressed shock at the Secretary of State's decision to introduce capping for district councils that he would now be saying that capping is a good thing for district councils?

**Mr. Thomason:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. O'Brien:** When I have finished, I shall certainly give way.

How can the hon. Gentleman turn his back on the colleagues he left behind at Chapter street? He said then that they had to oppose the capping procedures. Does he not feel that the people in Chapter street are entitled to his

*[Mr. O'Brien]*

support? Are not those who work in local government just as much entitled to his support now as they were when he was the leader of the ADC?

**Mr. Thomason:** My constituents are entitled to my support and they expect value for money in local government services. I have not changed my position over the independence of local government, but I take the view that it may be necessary to introduce capping for those authorities that are prepared to spend and spend again. Fortunately, there are few district councils that are prepared to do that. Most of them are extremely careful. My position remains the same.

**Mr. O'Brien:** At the time that the hon. Member for Bromsgrove expressed shock he was representing people who had elected him through the ballot box, just as he is now representing people as a Member of Parliament. The only change is that now that he has left the local authority scene and come to Parliament he has changed his mind. That is a measure of the lead that has been given by the former leader of the ADC.

When we discussed this legislation on Report the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said:

"That is why local authorities with small budgets are exempt from these clauses."—

the clauses referred to capping.

"The real risks to local and national economies come from the huge spending authorities which spend vast sums rather than from the small ones."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1988; Vol. 132, c. 41.]

When the hon. Gentleman intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) we found that he had changed his mind and done a complete somersault. He said that the small spending authorities were also a drain on national expenditure. That is another somersault committed by a Conservative hon. Member who now says something different from what he said when the legislation was introduced. However, I made it clear at the outset that of the six Conservative hon. Members who had spoken, four condemned the Government for capping certain authorities, and I am sure that local government appreciates such a stand.

The order is not targeted at high spending authorities and there is evidence, which has been mentioned several times this evening, which proves that. What is the position of the hon. Member for Spelthorne on the attack on low-spending authorities? Many local authorities have, under protest, accepted Government capping and have reduced their budgets accordingly. The record shows that Langbaurgh reduced its budget by £2 million, Middlesbrough reduced its budget by £1·4 million and my authority of Wakefield has made reductions of more than £4 million.

However, such cuts, which are the result of capping, often mean that the poorest sections of our community lose out disproportionately. Children, the disabled and the elderly are the people who suffer most as there have been increases in the charges for meals on wheels. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) is not a Labour Member of Parliament but he expressed concern that people would suffer because of the increaseas in charges for meals on wheels as a result of poll tax capping. The home help service and many other services are being cut, and the living standard and quality of life of the people on the lowest incomes have suffered dramatically as a direct result of poll tax capping. That was spelt out clearly by my hon. Friends the Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), and for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) and the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) who pointed out how cuts had affected the quality of life of people in their constituencies because of a reduction in services.

What hope is there for local authorities which face the 1990s with a reduction in resources, increasing demands for services, reduced flexibility, reactive budgeting and a worsening financial outlook, all brought about by capping? What future is there for local authorities facing such a scenario?

Since the draft capping order was published, three authorities have had their caps adjusted. The hon. Member for Billericay said how much her authority appreciated the reduction in its cap. Basildon's cap has been reduced by £1·95 million, Colchester's by £2·59 million and Warwickshire's by £4 million. We are not against authorities having their SSAs increased or their caps reduced but the question is, why does that apply only to those authorities?

Labour hon. Members asked that question, but it was also asked by the hon. Members for Stratford-on-Avon and for Gloucester (Mr. French). Labour hon. Members said that expenditure per adult, per schoolchild and per elderly person in their areas was identical to that of other authorities and yet their authorities were being capped because the Government had set the level of expenditure for those services at a lower level than was necessary in their communities. What hope is there for local authorities under a Conservative Government who attack them?

Of a total of 650 Members of Parliament, 266—or 40 per cent.—are former members of local authorities. One hundred and fifty one members of the Opposition and 111 Conservative hon. Members have all had experience of local government. All those 266 Members know the evil and devastation brought about by poll tax capping orders. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Conservative Members are afraid as, because of their experience in local government, they know that if they spoke honestly and fairly about poll tax capping they would say that it is a devastating way of reducing services to local people.

Former Labour councillors, many of whom have described the unfair and undemocratic way in which poll tax affects the provision of services by local authorities, will vote against the order. There is no doubt that those 151 Members who have served in local government will vote against the order, as will their right hon. and hon. Friends. But what I would like to see, and what people outside the House would like to see, is the 111 Tory MPs who have served in local government joining the Opposition and voting against the order. What the people of the Association of District Councils and the Association of County Councils would like to see is some solidarity from their Conservative colleagues in the Lobby tonight, and a vote against the order. Conservative hon. Members' experience, like ours, must weigh in favour of our colleagues—those councillors on whom Conservative Members appear to be turning their backs tonight. That must weigh on their consciences, as it would on ours.

We are trying to save local government; we are trying to make it work. The Minister says that he is in favour of local government, but he should demonstrate that from time to time by supporting it. I appeal to all hon. Members

who have served in local government to take the opportunity to defend it, and to give the people who work and serve in it a chance to continue what we fought to do —to improve services. If hon. Members want to protect local government services, the only way to do so is to vote with the Labour party against the capping order.

9.47 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire):** This has been an interesting debate, which has rightly commanded interest on both sides of the House. As usual on such annual occasions, most hon. Members who have spoken are from authorities which have been capped, whether the caps have been reduced or not. I especially welcomed the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Thomason), who drew on his wide experience in local government.

Many points have been raised by individual Members, and before I deal with as many of them as time allows I shall reiterate some key points about this year's capping. I may not be able to deal with all the matters raised, but, if I do not, I undertake to write to hon. Members in response to their points.

This year, as for 1991-92, we announced our intentions for the capping criteria well in advance. The capping principles that we adopted in May gave effect to those provisional criteria, with the addition of a de minimis proviso.

The success of our capping strategy has been clearly demonstrated; only 10 authorities exceeded the capping principles, and local authority budgets overall came within about 1 per cent. of the amount provided for in the revenue support grant settlement.

Of course, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State said at the beginning of the debate, we should prefer not to have capped any authority, but not to have designated the authorities in question would have been to fail to face up to our responsibilities for the economy as a whole, and for protecting local charge payers from the effects of excessive budgeting——

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North) *rose—*

**Mr. Squire:** Time is very tight, so I shall see how I go before giving way. I had less than 15 minutes to speak. As the House knows, I usually give way, but I am under great pressure of time.

I shall deal briefly with the contributions from both Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen—the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). We heard the same record; they still refuse to recognise any responsibility for controlling local authority expenditure under any circumstances—although during the general election campagin they said that they would cap regional assemblies. It does not add up—but then we know that things do not add up when we are talking about the Labour party.

Again we have heard the great ode to Wandsworth and Westminister. Let me list the standard spending assessments for some other councils in inner London. I shall not give many examples; I shall give just enough to provide the flavour. In Hackney, the standard spending assessment is £2,117 per adult; in Tower Hamlets, it is £2,048; in Islington, it is £1,722; and in Lambeth, it is £1,667. It is necessary to continue for some time before we reach Wandsworth's SSA, which is £1,388 per adult. Opposition Members imply that, if they were in government, they would not seek to measure need in their distribution of grant. I will pay them the tribute of saying that I do not believe them, but that is the logic of their position.

The hon. Member for Brightside said that the amounts involved were small—£3 or £5. Let me stress that capping does not exist solely to protect charge payers, although that is certainly its key aim. It exists to safeguard our national economic strategy. The sums with which we are dealing amount to £33·5 million: that may be nothing to Labour, but we consider it a significant figure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) and the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) made what they concede were similar points about boundary changes. I hope that the House will forgive me if I deal with the matter very carefully, for it is rather complex. In their challenges to the proposed caps, both Gloucester and Cheltenham argued that they should not have been capped in the first place, and that they had been caught by the capping criteria only because of a technicality

The increased population costs did not show up as part of Gloucester's or Cheltenham's demand on charge payers for 1991-92. Both councils have argued that we should have taken that into account in measuring the difference between their 1991-92 and 1992-93 budgets for capping purposes. In other words, they argued that the true increase in their budgeted spending was less than the simple difference between this year's and last year's overall budget figures, and that they should therefore have escaped capping.

Both councils received a large increase in their standard spending assessments in 1992-93 to reflect the boundary changes. Neither my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester nor the hon. Member for Cheltenham disputes that; it is common ground between us. If the councils had budgeted in 1991-92 at or below their SSAs, they could have increased their budgets this year by the full amount of the increase in SSAs; but both councils budgeted above SSA in 1991-92, and that was before the boundary change. They are now saying, in effect, that they should be able to continue to spend above SSA, notwithstanding the large increases that they have received. Cheltenham has increased its budget by 16·6 per cent., leaving it 9 per cent. above SSA; Gloucester's budget has increased by 12 per cent., to 2·4 per cent. above SSA.

Only yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester wrote to me asking me to think again about the treatment of Gloucester city council. I am sure that he will forgive me if I briefly summarise the terms of the reply that he received. The Government carefully considered all the points made by both Gloucester and Cheltenham councils in support of their challenges, and all other relevant matters, in reaching a decision. We fully understand the councils' arguments about the effect of their boundary change on their base budgets for capping purposes. The councils say that they misunderstood our intentions. I am sorry if that is so, but I do not believe that they had grounds for assuming that their base budget for capping purposes would be adjusted in the way that they were advocating.

The then Secretary of State for the Environment, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade,

*[Mr. Squire]*

announced his provisional capping criteria to the House on 26 November 1991. Subsequently, Ministers told the House on two separate occasions—my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 23 January and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, then the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, on 12 March—that it remained the Government's intention that the provisional criteria should be the criteria that they would adopt to select authorities for capping in 1992-93.

The Government considered that, in all circumstances, a specific additional allowance in the capping criteria for the effect of the boundary changes—over and above the full reflection of the changes in the 1992-93 SSAs—was not appropriate.

Let me deal now with the question of asylum seekers, which was raised by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and my hon. Friends the Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). My colleagues from Hillingdon have raised the matter before. Hillingdon argues that we should make a special allowance for that cost, which is estimated at around £1 million.

We considered the council's arguments on that point —and, indeed, all its other arguments—very carefully, and decided that, in all Hillingdon's circumstances, a relaxation in the proposed cap was not appropriate.

An authority's standard spending assessment is an objective measure, based on a large number of indicators, of what it is appropriate for that authority to spend in the light of its own particular circumstances. Within the SSA, there is an allowance for the cost of services, such as education and social services, that authorities have to provide to children in their area. I cannot, of course, say that the cost of looking after every child arriving in Hillingdon is taken individually into account in calculating the authority's SSA. That would be impossible in a formula-based assessment. But the SSA does, I believe, give a fair overall assessment of an appropriate level of spending in Hillingdon given the characteristics of the area. Moreover, my hon. Friends will have heard my hon. Friend the Minister of State give an undertaking, which I now repeat, to look again at any representations made by hon. Members and at their suggestions for improving or changing the standard spending assessment.

I shall give Warwickshire Members a detailed answer at a later date, as I am afraid I do not have time to do so now. Instead, let me summarise the position. I understand from my long-term hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) and from the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) that they remain unhappy about the SSA in Warwickshire. I must point out that, compared with similar neighbouring authorities, Warwickshire does not do as badly as hon. Members may think. At £782, its standard spending assessment per head is of the same order of magnitude as those of Hereford and Worcester, at £785, and Avon, at £798.

To the hon. Members for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker), I would simply say that Greenwich has a history of overspending. It has been capped in every year since capping started in 1985. That is a record. For yet another year, the Government are obliged to step in to protect charge payers in Greenwich from the financial consequences of their council's actions. In the past two years, capping has knocked a total of £74 off the charges set by the council. This year's cap will reduce charges by £56. I am sure that, notwithstanding hon. Members' comments, the vast majority of people in Greenwich are only too grateful for capping.

**Mr. Raynsford:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Squire:** I have undertaken to write to hon. Members on points that I cannot cover in the time available.

I turn, with some relief, to Basildon. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) distinguished herself in the debate by welcoming the action taken by the Government. We have listened carefully to everything that Basildon has said in its challenge.

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): Is my hon. Friend aware that, according to local press reports, the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) and for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will be in my constituency at the weekend leading a demonstration which will be supported by Militant Tendency? Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment at my not being able to express the views of my constituents in the debate tonight?

**Mr. Squire** *rose*——

*It being three hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion,* MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [19 June]:*

*The House divided:* Ayes 312, Noes 254.

**Division No. 41]** **[9.58 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Adley, Robert | Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)* |
| Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)* | Budgen, Nicholas |
| Aitken, Jonathan | Burns, Simon |
| Alexander, Richard | Burt, Alistair |
| Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)* | Butler, Peter |
| Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)* | Butterfill, John |
| Amess, David | Carlisle, John *(Luton North)* |
| Ancram, Michael | Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)* |
| Arbuthnot, James | Carrington, Matthew |
| Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)* | Carttiss, Michael |
| Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)* | Cash, William |
| Ashby, David | Channon, Rt Hon Paul |
| Aspinwall, Jack | Chaplin, Mrs Judith |
| Atkins, Robert | Churchill, Mr |
| Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)* | Clappison, James |
| Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)* | Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)* |
| Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)* | Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushl)* |
| Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)* | Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey |
| Baldry, Tony | Coe, Sebastian |
| Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)* | Colvin, Michael |
| Bates, Michael | Congdon, David |
| Batiste, Spencer | Conway, Derek |
| Bellingham, Henry | Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)* |
| Bendall, Vivian | Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)* |
| Beresford, Sir Paul | Cope, Rt Hon Sir John |
| Biffen, Rt Hon John | Cormack, Patrick |
| Blackburn, Dr John G. | Couchman, James |
| Bonsor, Sir Nicholas | Cran, James |
| Booth, Hartley | Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)* |
| Boswell, Tim | Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)* |
| Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)* | Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)* |
| Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia | Davis, David *(Boothferry)* |
| Bowden, Andrew | Day, Stephen |
| Bowis, John | Deva, Nirj Joseph |
| Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes | Devlin, Tim |
| Brandreth, Gyles | Dickens, Geoffrey |
| Brazier, Julian | Dorrell, Stephen |
| Bright, Graham | Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James |
| Brooke, Rt Hon Peter | Dover, Den |
| Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)* | Duncan, Alan |
| Browning, Mrs. Angela | Duncan-Smith, Iain |

Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Irvine Patnick and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, James
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret

Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Michael
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoff
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'de E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Ken Eastham and**
**Mr. Eric Illsley.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Charge Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

## Mentally Ill and Handicapped Prisoners

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.13 pm

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): I first raised these matters on an Adjournment debate similarly entitled— *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Would hon. Members leaving the Chamber do so quietly so that we can get on with our business?

**Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am sure that I shall be awarded injury time.

I am delighted to see that the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster are present, as well as the Minister of State, Home Office, because the problems of mentally ill people in prison might be helped by their interest.

I first raised this matter in an Adjournment debate, similarly entitled "Mentally Handicapped and Mentally Ill Prisoners", on 16 July 1986. I should have liked to report that there has been more progress since then. However, as there has been no progress, there is need for this debate.

I had hoped for an Adjournment debate in February but, unfortunately, that was not possible. As the Minister knows, prior to that I had visited Brixton prison and saw some examples of dedication on the part of the staff, but also matters which I am sure will worry the House deeply and will help us to concentrate on the issues under discussion.

The governor of Brixton prison, Dr. Coyle, is extremely dedicated. Without dwelling on such important issues as F-wing and other aspects of psychiatric care, I thought it would be right to give a flavour of my visit by quoting a letter that the governor wrote to *The Independent* in response to some criticisms made last October, which I think were unreasonable. Two points in the governor's letter are well worth making. He said, first, in respect of his prison:

"For many years, in excess of 1,000 prisoners have been crammed into some 700 cells . . . Among this number of prisoners about 300 on any one day require medical supervision of one form or another. The vast majority has been remanded for psychiatric reports. That is the equivalent of a medium-sized psychiatric hospital. It is important to remember that Brixton is not a psychiatric hospital."

Elsewhere in his letter Dr. Coyle wrote:

"In the past 12 months there have been two deaths by suicide in Brixton Prison. These are two too many but they have to be seen in context and comparisons can usefully be made with the experience in psychiatric hospitals similar in size to the medical wing at Brixton. During the same period staff have successfully intervened to prevent 38 prisoners taking their lives. That indicates a level of care of which Brixton can be proud."

The governor was absolutely right. Sadly, many of the problems that he outlined are shared by other prisons and are worthy of our consideration.

The Minister will be aware of the Gunn report, which found that about one third of sample male prisoners and 59 per cent. of females were diagnosed as having some kind of psychiatric problem.

The review of health and social services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services, chaired by Dr. John Reed, also reported on various groups and their needs. We know that every person in those circumstances is unique, and is entitled to an individual assessment and to understanding of his or her problems.

The Gunn report was published in 1990 and revised in 1991. The Minister will be aware of its contents. I found that one of the most distressing points made in the report was:

"In some prison hospitals, it is possible to see an acutely psychotic patient locked in a cell for the whole day. He may be clad only in a canvas shirt with no possessions or furniture other than a mattress, possibly soaked in urine or soiled with excrement. Compulsory treatment can only be given in an emergency. Patients kept in such conditions in the health service would be the cause of public outcry and an inquiry. The situation is no more defensible when it occurs in prison."

I entirely agree.

Of the Gunn report, *The Guardian* said:

"At least one in five sentenced prisoners is thought to have a mental disorder. A study funded by the Home Office and published in October put the incidence as high as 14,000 of the 38,000 sentenced prison population, with 1,100 so ill that they require immediate treatment."

That is extremely worrying to the medical staff who seek to serve such prisoners, to voluntary organisations, and to the families of those individuals.

In December 1991, the *Health Service Journal* reported at length on the problem. I do not wish to weary the House by quoting exactly from that article, but it was interesting that it appeared under the heading "Prisoners who know not what they have done". The fact that there are people in prison experiencing enormous difficulties, who often are unable to cope with the environment in which they find themselves and who do not know why they are there, tells us a lot. Surely there must be better ways of dealing with such persons. I hope that the Minister can reassure us that the Government and their various Departments are at least aware that such problems exist in many prisons and not just in Brixton.

My worry is that, as I understand it, there has been no policy statement that explicitly covers the care and treatment of those in need of mental health care who remain in prison. However, the Government have published one document, to which I hope to refer. I am concerned about strategy and about the Government's approach to reducing the numbers and to coping with those who are in prison. Of course, it is increasingly accepted that too many mentally disordered and disturbed offenders are in prison who should not be there. However, there is no clear strategy across relevant Government Departments to ensure that services are available, and no single Department has lead responsibility for the care of mentally disturbed offenders.

If, as I understand it, the Government's policy is to reduce the number of such people coming into the criminal justice system, may I ask what is being done to achieve that end? How are such people being taken out of the system? Are they being dealt with in accordance with a proper assessment of the difficulties that they face? If the debate achieves nothing other than to obtain a clear statement from the Minister on the Government's approach to those important issues, its importance will be confirmed.

In preparing for the debate, I received a number of letters and representations from voluntary organisations. Colin MacKay, of the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, wrote to me, saying:

"There are no adequate alternatives to prison particularly for people with a mild or moderate handicap who persistently offend . . . The police have little training in mental handicap and may fail to recognise it, or not know what to do about it

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column 97, if he will list the four United States armed services employed at Menwith Hill station.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The army, air force, navy and marine corps.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Companies, Leicester

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will identify the schemes that his Department already has in place to help companies in Leicester and specify when each began; what resources the Government are putting into such schemes; and what is their current and likely duration.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** There are a number of schemes of support which apply nationally and which are available to companies in Leicester. These include help and advice to new or existing exporters; support in the area of research and technology such as the small firms merit award for research—SMART—support for products under research —SPUR—and consultancy support under the enterprise initiative. It is not possible to specify expenditure in Leicester. The consultancy initiatives are due to terminate in March 1994, but the other schemes are ongoing. I have arranged for copies of the appropriate literature to be lodged in the House of Commons Library.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Clenbuterol

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the tonnage of beef found to contain clenbuterol over the last 12 months and its country or region of origin.

**Mr. Soames:** Under the Ministry's imported meat monitoring programme and retail animal products survey, 214 samples of bovine liver, muscle and kidney have been taken since June 1991 and analysed for residues of clenbuterol. Four samples from the Republic of Ireland proved positive. Details of the tonnages involved are not available. This surveillance programme focuses on produce from countries in which clenbuterol misuse is known to have occurred and therefore these results do not reflect the general incidence of clenbuterol residues in imported bovine meat.

In Great Britain, testing by the state veterinary service for clenbuterol residues in animals and carcases on farm and at slaughterhouses has been stepped up, but no evidence of misuse has been detected.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available on the numbers of cattle herds in England, Scotland and Wales that *(a)* did and *(b)* did not experience any BSE cases in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Soames:** The number of herds with at least one confirmed case of BSE reported during the following years is shown in the table:

| | *England* | *Wales* | *Scotland* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1989 | 3,920 | 397 | 175 |
| 1990 | 6,504 | 712 | 374 |
| 1991 | 9,393 | 1,292 | 581 |

It is not possible to give precise figures for herds which did not suffer any confirmed cases of BSE, because agricultural census information does not differentiate between holdings with single and multiple herds or record minor holdings. But the numbers of holdings without a confirmed case in each of the years concerned were as follows:

| | *England* | *Wales* | *Scotland* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1989 | 77,831 | 19,519 | 16,983 |
| 1990 | 73,186 | 18,877 | 16,673 |
| 1991 | 68,423 | 17,947 | [1]16,466 |

[1]Using 1990 census.

### Rabies

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the unpublished recommendations on the movement of animals from a World Health Organisation expert committee on rabies.

**Mr. Gummer:** The recommendations are expected to be published shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library as soon as it is available.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the new rabies control measures agreed for cats and dogs which are traded for breeding purposes will require vaccination within 12 months before movement; how long an animal will be prevented from being moved when it is vaccinated for the first time; what are the requirements on revaccination; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** Animals must be vaccinated during the 12 months prior to movement. They must be at least three months of age before their first vaccination and cannot be traded until at least six months after the first vaccination. Revaccination at annual intervals dispenses with the need for additional blood tests and allows for movement immediately after the latest vaccination.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the regulations on rabies control agreed on 15 June apply to dogs and cats imported for breeding purposes from third countries as well as other EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** In the absence of more specific rules, measures in relation to imports from third countries can be no more favourable than those applying to member states. There is no reason to change our existing quarantine requirements on imports from third countries.

### Animal Imports

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *83*, how many animals in each category were imported into the United Kingdom in 1991.

**Mr. Gummer:** These data are not collected.

### Pâté Producers

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of producers of pâté de foie gras in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Curry:** Foie gras is not produced on farms in the United Kingdom. Foie gras is imported, possibly for the production of pâté de foie gras, but information about the number of such producers is not available.

## SCOTLAND

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Lang:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on 24 June, at columns *208-9*. I have nothing to add.

### Child Care, Fife

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received the report of the inquiry into child care in Fife; if he will publish it; what was the total cost of the inquiry; and whether Fife regional council will be asked to make a contribution to the costs.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* Sheriff Kearney submitted his report on 16 June to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who is now considering it. Once he has completed his consideration he will decide whether to publish the report and how its recommendations should be followed up.

The full expenses incurred by the Scottish Office in holding the inquiry are estimated at £840,000.

It is too early for my right hon. Friend to decide whether and in what way to exercise his powers under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 regarding the expenses of holding the inquiry.

### Highlands and Islands

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when the programme monitoring committee of the highlands and islands national programme of community interest last met; and what projects were approved for funding;

(2) what progress has been made by his Department and the European Commission in setting up the highlands and islands operational programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The programme monitoring committee of the highlands and islands national programme of community interest most recently met on Shetland on Thursday 4 June 1992. No new project proposals were approved as the available funds had already been fully accounted for by projects approved in principle by the committee at earlier meetings.

Once the European Commission has approved the new operational programme, which is expected to be worth some £8 million over two years, the programme monitoring committee will consider further applications for project funding. The available funds are expected to be significantly over subscribed.

### Social Security Funds

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the reallocation of Department of Social Security funds, to be done when community care plans are implemented in 1993, will be according to the Barnett formula.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* Ministers of the Departments concerned have yet to reach agreeement on the territorial distribution of the transfer.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 29 June 1992*

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**The Attorney-General:** No bilateral or multilateral agreements with either Switzerland or Liechtenstein have been negotiated directly or indirectly by departments for which I have responsibility.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** A complete list of all bilateral and multilateral agreements between the United Kingdom and Switzerland or Liechtenstein could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Wheel Clamping

**Sir Gerard Vaughan:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will ask the Law Commission to review the law on wheel clamping of vehicles on private land.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor has no plans at present to ask the Law Commission to review the law relating to wheel-clamping activities. The recent ruling of the High Court of Justiciary in Scotland will, however, be examined carefully by the Government with a view to ascertaining its possible relevance to the position in England and Wales.

### Child Abduction

**Mr. Olner:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is planning to take to tighten up procedures whereby a single parent is able to take a child out of the country without the express consent of the other parent.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The removal of a child will in most cases constitute an offence under the existing law. The Government have no current proposals for changes in the law in this field, but are willing to consider any suggestions that are made. In addition, the operation of the Children Act 1989 is being monitored so that any changes which might be of assistance may be identified in the light of experience.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Sittings of the House

45. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to reply to the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House.

**Mr. Newton:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

### Lockerbie

46. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will set up a Select Committee on Lockerbie.

**Mr. Newton:** No. Lockerbie matters are regularly raised in the House and I see no need for such a Committee.

### Top Salaries Review Body

47. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he will lay the Top Salaries Review Body's report into Members' allowances before the House; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Lord President of the Council who has been appointed as a consultant to his office for market testing.

**Mr. Newton:** There are no activities carried out in the Privy Council Office of a suitable nature, or of sufficient scale, for market testing.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to carry out new consultations with a view to revising the guidelines on compensation payments to owners of sites of special scientific interest.

**Mr. Maclean:** Yes.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he has taken of the size of awards to landowners made in respect of sites of special scientific interest in the past when planning the total of future public spending on nature conservation.

**Mr. Maclean:** Public expenditure plans for conservation are informed by the figures provided by English Nature in its corporate plan which takes account of the likely costs of payments to owners of SSSIs under management agreements.

### Landowners (Payments)

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent assessment he has made of the accuracy of the forecasts made by his consultants, Laurence Gould Associates, of the level of payments to landowners under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**Mr. Maclean:** We will take account of the Laurence Gould report, together with advice from English Nature, on the actual level of payments made to landowners in the forthcoming review of the financial guideline.

### Air Quality

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to extend and improve the effectiveness of the monitoring of air quality in urban areas.

**Mr. Maclean:** Plans to expand the geographical coverage of the Department's urban air quality monitoring and the range of pollutants measures were announced in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". The first phase of the expansion was implemented in January. Five new sites are now in operation: London Bloomsbury, Newcastle centre, Belfast centre, Birmingham centre, and Cardiff. Sites are to follow in Edinburgh, Bristol, Leeds and Liverpool.

Each of these sites monitors $SO_2$, CO, NO, $NO_2$, ozone and $PM_{10}$ on a continuous basis. Air quality bulletins drawing on the results are now available on Ceefax page 196 and on a free telephone call line 0900 556677.

### Urban Development Corporations

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table indicating for each urban development corporation *(a)* how much land each UDC has acquired in total, *(b)* how much land each UDC currently retains, *(c)* how much money each UDC has spent in land transactions, and *(d)* how much money each UDC has received from land transactions.

**Mr. Redwood** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* This information is shown in the table.

*LAND TRANSACTIONS*

The table shows, at column;

*(a)* how much land each UDC has acquired in total;

*(b)* how much land each UDC currently retains;

*(c)* how much money each UDC has spent in land transactions; and

*(d)* how much money each UDC has received from land transactions.

| *UDC* | *(a)* *hectares* | *(b)* *hectares* | *(c)* *£ million* | *(d)* *£ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black Country | 399·000 | 349·000 | 68·000 | 3·700 |
| Bristol | 16·190 | 16·190 | 24·371 | nil |
| Central Manchester | 5·115 | 5·115 | 12·278 | nil |
| Leeds | 41·210 | 37·160 | 17·525 | 1·762 |
| London Docklands | 870·000 | 594·000 | 161·000 | 302·000 |
| Merseyside | 382·000 | 333·000 | 29·000 | 11·200 |
| Sheffield | 170·000 | 73·000 | [2]22·700 | [3]0·370 |
| Teesside | 417·730 | 367·860 | [4]28·465 | [4]6·129 |
| Trafford Park | 167·090 | 145·790 | 41·619 | 9·258 |
| Tyne and Wear | 330·000 | 280·270 | 42·359 | 5·814 |

*Notes:*

[1]All figures are up to the period ending 31 March 1992.

[2]Including estimate of land vested but still subject to negotiation.

[3]A further £7·395 million is due under firm building agreements.

[4]These figures include expenditure on buildings.

### North Warwickshire Borough Council

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the provisional cap on spending on North Warwickshire borough council takes into account all the individual circumstances of the council, including its RECHAR funding potential.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* North Warwickshire borough council is not one of the authorities which have been designated for capping by my right hon. and learned Friend.

### Local Government (London)

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what review the Local Government Commission will be conducting of the pattern of local government in London; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 12 May, *Official Report*, column 59. We intend to ask the commission to look at cases for change to local government boundaries in London when it has completed its programme of structural reviews in the shire counties.

### Local Government Officers

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number of local government officers who have been *(a)* disciplined and *(b)* dismissed for political activities in contravention of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* This information is not collected by my Department.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring is undertaken by his Department in respect of the political activities of local government officers in contravention of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* My Department does not monitor the relevant provisions of this Act.

### City Challenge

**Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress on Southwark council's bids under the city challenge scheme; and how many other councils have submitted applications.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* Fifty-four local authorities, including the London borough of Southwark, have submitted bids in the current round of city challenge. All the bids have been assessed against the aims and criteria set out in the published bidding guidance. Ministers from the Department of the Environment have considered the bids and reports of the regional presentations to officials and have met each bidding authority. The successful authorities will be announced by the end of July 1992.

### Empty Property

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what income was derived from rates on empty properties in the most recent period of 12 months;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce regulations to prevent property owners vandalising their own empty properties to avoid the payment of rates;

(3) what proposals he has to reduce the rate liability on empty buildings; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what information he has on the extent of building vandalisation in the City of London to avoid payment of rates.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* We have no plans to change the law governing the rating of empty property. Empty property benefits from local services and it is right that it should contribute to the costs incurred by local authorities. Property, whether occupied or not, is rateable if it is capable of beneficial occupation. If owners judge it commercially advantageous to render property unusable, that is a matter for them.

We are aware that five unoccupied properties in the City of London have been made unusable by their owners in order to avoid rates liability. We estimate the loss of rate yield at about £3 million. This has to be set against an estimated total rate income in England from empty property in 1992-93 of some £600 million.

We are already providing £1·25 billion of help to businesses over the next three years under the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Disabled People

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what measures and aid his Department will make available to enable disabled people to take part in sporting activities.

**Mr. Key:** In 1991-92, nearly £1 million was spent by the Sports Council on promoting sport for people with disabilities. The council is also working closely with the disability sports organisations and the governing bodies of sport on the implementation of the recommendations of the ministerial review report on sport for people with disabilities, "Building on Ability". I shall be attending the paralympics in Spain in September.

### Channel 5

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to ensure that the headquarters and the base of operations of Channel 5 is located some distance from London.

**Mr. Key:** No. The location of Channel 5's headquarters and base of operations will be a matter for the licensee to decide.

### London Zoo

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what representations he has received from *(a)* the public and *(b)* the Zoological Society in respect of the recent announcement of the likely closure of London zoo;

(2) if he will provide such assistance, advice and resources to the Zoological Society as are required to safeguard the future of animals in the event of London zoo being closed.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* My right hon. and learned Friend and I have discussed with the Zoological Society of London the consequences of the society's decision to close London zoo. We have made it clear that no more taxpayers' money can be given to the zoo, but that we stand by the offer made last year to relieve the society of some of its obligations as lessees.

The Department has received several letters from members of the public.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Botswana

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of Her Majesty's Government's bilateral aid to Botswana.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Gross British bilateral aid, including Commonwealth Development Corporation investments, to Botswana was provisionally estimated to be £12·18 million in 1991.

### Brazil

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the progress of Overseas Development Administration projects to protect the health of the Yanomami tribe.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In 1990 we provided through Oxfam a grant of £90,000 to the Campaign for the Creation of a Yanomami Park, a Brazilian non-governmental organisation, to fund the provision of equipment, salaries, communication and travel costs for a health care project in the Demini area of what is now Yanomami national park. The agreed activities have been successfully completed.

We have this year agreed a second grant through Oxfam, of £175,000, for a new phase of the project which will, among other things, help to support a team of medical staff in the reserve and establish a second health post in addition to that presently operating at Demini.

We have also indicated to the Brazilian authorities our willingness to consider support for government work to provide health services to the Yanomami.

### Third World Debt

**Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the Government's latest plans to assist in the reduction of third world debt for 1992-93.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Agreement to begin implementing the Prime Minister's Trinidad terms initiative to relieve the burden of official debt on the poorest countries was achieved in December. Seven countries have already benefited and we expect many more to do so over coming months. As these new agreements take effect, we can expect a significant reduction in repayments due to government creditors. None the less, the Government continue to press for even greater relief for the poorest, most indebted countries carrying out economic reform.

The Government have strongly supported and provided their share of resources needed to implement a 1989 agreement, known as the Brady plan, to help deal with the problem of commercial debt. Deals involving the

effective cancellation of substantial portions of bank debts have been agreed, or are being negotiated, with most of the largest debtors. Most recently, Argentina agreed a deal which will involve an effective reduction of its $25 billion long-term debt to banks by around a third. Brazil is currently negotiating a similar deal with its commercial creditors.

### Know-how Funds

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the know-how fund for central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; and if he will give details on the specific projects so far approved this year for each eligible country.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The know-how fund for central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union is going extremely well. Some £82 million has now been spent or committed to well over 400 projects. Other western Governments are using our know-how fund as a model for their own.

A list of the activities approved since the beginning of 1992 under the know-how fund has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Natural Resources Institute

**Mr. Willetts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the performance targets for the Overseas Development Administration's natural resources institute in 1992-93.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** NRI's performance targets for 1992-93 are to break even on full economic costs; to achieve an efficiency gain of at least 1·5 per cent.; and to continue to expand the share of work undertaken for non-ODA clients.

### Indian Ocean (Fishing Rights)

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the actual and potential fishing rights surrounding *(a)* Diego Garcia and *(b)* other British Indian ocean territories.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* On 1 October 1991 Her Majesty's Government declared a 200-mile fisheries conservation and management zone around the British Indian ocean territory. We aim to play a full part in the sensible management and conservation of fishing stocks in that area.

### Russia

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase medical, financial and technological aid to Russia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Bilateral technical assistance to the former Soviet Union, including Russia, is provided through a know-how fund totalling £50 million. A further major contribution is made through our 18 per cent. share of the 450 mecu annual European Commission technical assistance programme, and we have also given £1 million to projects under the auspices of the European bank for reconstruction and development.

In addition, in February of this year we provided £2 million worth of emergency medical assistance to the republics of the former Soviet Union, including major donations of drugs and equipment to the Russian cities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinburg, Tyumen and Novokuznetsk.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** In line with the proposals in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, Ernst and Young was employed to assist in the preparation of my Department's market-testing programme.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Civil Service

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil servants there are in the Northern Ireland Office; and how many are based in *(a)* London and *(b)* Northern Ireland, indicating in each case the number that are members of the Northern Ireland civil service.

**Mr. Mates:** As at 1 May 1992 there were 1,535 staff in the Northern Ireland Office. The breakdown between the home civil service and the Northern Ireland civil service and the two locations is as follows:

| | *Civil Service* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Home* | *Northern Ireland* |
| London | 102 | 3 |
| Northern Ireland | 103 | 1,327 |
| | 205 | 1,330 |

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Mates:** Michael Willacy Associates.

### Training and Employment Agency

**Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what targets have been set for the Training and Employment Agency for Northern Ireland for the period 1992 to 1995.

**Mr. Atkins:** The following are the targets which have been set for the Training and Employment Agency for the period 1992-95:

1. To increase the number of companies developing their management and work force skills from 125 at April 1992 to 225 by March 1993 and to 500 by March 1995.
2. To increase by 10 per cent per year the proportion of potential entrants into employment with high levels of attainment as measured by qualification.

3. In 1992-93 to place 30,000 people into jobs and 15,500 people into training and other agency schemes.
4. To provide every inward-investment company referred to the agency by the Industrial Development Board with relevant information, advice and customised training.
5. To maintain customer satisfaction levels and where possible increase them.
6. To reduce administration costs by at least 2 per cent. yearly.
7. To establish by March 1993 an initial baseline of unit costs for agency programmes on a full economic cost basis.
8. To meet [illegible] the agency the national Investors in People standard by 31 March 1994.

## EDUCATION

### Postgraduate Courses

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list those local education authorities which provide discretionary awards to cover *(a)* one-year postgraduate law courses and *(b)* two-year postgraduate courses for non-law graduates; if he will list the average award made by those local education authorities in terms of maintenance grants and tuition fees; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** These data are not collected centrally.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools, and of what type, had *(a)* voted for and *(b)* voted against applying for grant-maintained status in the period (i) 1988 to 9 April 1992 and (ii) since 9 April; and how many schools of each type have notified his Department of their intention to ballot on grant-maintained status.

**Mr. Patten:** The information requested by the hon. Member follows:

*Ballots on grant-maintained status*

| | *(a) in favour* | *(b) against* |
|---|---|---|
| *(i) 1988—9 April 1992* | | |
| Primary Schools | 90 | 27 |
| of which | | |
| County | 63 | 21 |
| Voluntary Aided | 13 | 1 |
| Voluntary Controlled | 14 | 5 |
| Special Agreement | 0 | 0 |
| Secondary Schools | 262 | 81 |
| of which | | |
| County | 205 | 69 |
| Voluntary Aided | 29 | 8 |
| Voluntary Controlled | 26 | 3 |
| Special Agreement | 2 | 1 |
| Total | 352 | 108 |
| *(ii) 9 April 1992—29 June 1992* | | |
| Primary Schools | 6 | 3 |
| of which | | |
| County | 6 | 2 |
| Voluntary Aided | 0 | 0 |
| Voluntary Controlled | 0 | 1 |
| Special Agreement | 0 | 0 |
| Secondary Schools | 18 | 2 |
| of which | | |
| County | 14 | 2 |
| Voluntary Aided | 1 | 0 |
| Voluntary Controlled | 3 | 0 |
| Special Agreement | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 24 | 5 |
| *Schools with ballots pending* | | |
| Primary Schools | 8 | — |
| of which | | |
| County | 6 | — |
| Voluntary aided | 2 | — |
| Voluntary Controlled | 0 | — |
| Special Agreement | 0 | — |
| Secondary Schools | 48 | — |
| of which | | |
| County | 34 | — |
| Voluntary Aided | 10 | — |
| Voluntary Controlled | 2 | — |
| Special Agreement | 2 | — |
| Total | 56 | — |

### Fitzherbert School, Brighton

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to dispose of the site of the former Fitzherbert school, Brighton; what is the current valuation of the site; what is the total expenditure by his Department on the site to date; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Patten:** The CTC trust has been actively marketing the site of the former Fitzherbert school in Brighton, and is engaged in current negotiations to sell it. The total costs of maintaining the site to the end of May 1992 are £183,000. In view of the current negotiations, it would not be appropriate to give a detailed valuation of the site.

### Training Grants

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to cease funding of the GEST—grants for education support and training—and LEATGS—local education authority training grants scheme—programmes from April 1993;

(2) when he intends to consult the local authority associations, as required under section 3(5) of the Grants and Awards Act 1984, on changes to the GEST and LEATGS programmes.

**Mr. Forth:** We have no plans to cease funding the programme of grants for education support and training, which includes education support grants and LEA training grants. My right hon. Friend will be writing shortly to the local authority associations with his proposals for the 1993-94 GEST programme.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Forth:** KPMG Management Consulting Ltd. was appointed in March 1992 to advise on the scope for market testing within the Department.

### Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further measures he is taking to help parents who are in dispute with authorities over their child's special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** The Government have decided to establish a new independent special educational needs tribunal as part of their package of legislative reforms on SEN announced by my noble Friend the Minister of State in another place on 11 June. The tribunal would replace the jurisdiction of both the Secretary of State and appeals committees to hear appeals under the Education Act 1981. The tribunal will give parents quicker redress, a more open and independent hearing, and a simplified structure in line with the parents charter.

### New School Buildings

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average cost of providing a school place at primary, secondary and comprehensive schools when new buildings are constructed.

**Mr. Forth:** The information requested is not immediately available. I shall write to my hon. Friend when it is.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Disabled People

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out the occasions in the last Session of Parliament on which Ministers have stated the Government's policy on whether a legislative approach is the right way to deal with discrimination against people with disabilities; which Minister has the principal responsibility in this matter; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government's view was stated principally on 31 January during Second Reading of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People at column 1251.

### Security Services

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the monitoring of hon. Members by the security services.

**The Prime Minister:** The policy remains as stated in 1966 by the then Prime Minister, the Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, and as applied by successive Governments since. In answers to questions on 17 November 1966, Lord Wilson said that he had given instructions that there was to be no tapping of the telephones of Members of Parliament, that remained the policy of the Government and that, if there was a development which required a change in the general policy, he would, at such moment as seemed compatible with the security of the country, on his own initiative make a statement in the House about it. The Government regard this undertaking as still applying to both postal and telephone interception.

### Earth Summit

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what attempts will be made by Her Majesty's Government to encourage sufficient states to sign the Rio treaties on climate change and biodiversity respectively to permit the consequent entering into force of the treaties.

**The Prime Minister:** By the end of the Earth summit, 153 states and the EC had signed the conventions on climate change and biodiversity. For the conventions to enter into force, 50 states, in the case of climate change, and 30 states, in the case of biodiversity, must ratify them.

I have written to the leaders of all EC and Group of Seven countries about the need to maintain the momentum generated by the summit and I have proposed that they draw up a plan of action to include the prompt implementation of both conventions.

### War Crimes

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *106*, concerning documents relating to the wartime Nazi occupation of the Channel Islands, he has completed his inquiries; and whether he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The current review of the documents to which the hon. and learned Member refers is proceeding. Considerable work is involved. I will write to him as soon as inquiries have been completed.

### China

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the proposed human rights fact-finding visit to the People's Republic of China.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 13 March 1992 at column *687*. We are in contact with Sir Geoffrey Howe and the Chinese authorities over detailed arrangements, including timing, composition and itinerary.

### Youth Training

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the extent to which the difficulties experienced by young people in obtaining suitable training, to which he referred in his letter of 4 June to the general secretary of the TUC, have now been removed, and of the adequacy of the measures taken to prevent hardship to young people experiencing such difficulties now or in the future.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* The Government are using the contractual relationship with training and enterprise councils to ensure that the difficulties experienced by a minority of young people are addressed urgently. Every TEC is contractually obliged to meet the forecast covered by the Government's youth training guarantee. The Government are committed to seeing that the guarantee is met.

The severe hardship provision of income support provides a safety net of benefit for those young people seeking work or a YT place who are at risk of hardship.

The Government continue to monitor the position closely and seek to improve and streamline the administration of benefit wherever possible.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Self-regulatory Organisations

**Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what representations he has received concerning a reduction in the number of self-regulatory organisations;

(2) whether he has considered the Cucas report on financial services; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nelson:** Matters relating to the recognition of self-regulating organisations under the Financial Services Act 1986 are primarily for the Securities and Investments Board.

### Financial Services

**Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what appraisal he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of a single regulatory body to oversee financial services;

(2) what appraisal he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of a single regulatory body to oversee wholesale investment markets.

**Mr. Nelson:** Responsibility for the regulation of financial services passed to me on 7 June 1992. No changes are planned as a result of the transfer, but I shall, of course, keep the effectiveness of the regulatory system under review.

### Carbon Tax

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which revenue collection body in the United Kingdom would be responsible for collecting a carbon tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir John Cope:** On the basis of the proposals put forward by the European Commission and described in explanatory memorandum 8918/91 dated 4 December 1991, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise would be responsible for collecting the revenues associated with a carbon tax in the United Kingdom.

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the price of a litre of petrol of the proposed carbon tax, introduced at $3 a barrel of oil, rising to $10 a barrel.

**Sir John Cope:** A carbon/energy tax of $3 per barrel of oil would add around 1p to the price of a litre of petrol. A tax of $10 per barrel would add around 3·5p per litre. The actual impact of the tax on the retail price of petrol would depend on many factors, including the price of oil, which may be influenced by a carbon tax.

### Inflation

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the reasons underlying his statement of 11 June, *Official Report*, column 432, that 2 per cent. inflation was probably the equivalent of price stability.

**Mr. Nelson:** I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statements in the minutes of evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's inquiry into economic and monetary union. A limited degree of recorded inflation is compatible with the concept of price stability, reflecting a number of problems in measuring inflation, including those associated with new products and quality changes.

### Retrospectivity

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes have been made to Government policy in relation to retrospective tax legislation since 6 June 1991.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Government policy in relation to retrospective tax legislation has not changed since 6 June 1991.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what policy governs the Government's decision as to the timing of their retrospective measures.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government propose tax legislation that has retrospective effect only after very careful consideration of all the circumstances. Any such proposal is then announced at the earliest suitable opportunity.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether the protection in the Government policy in relation to retrospective tax legislation extends equally to taxpayers who have not themselves brought proceedings but *(a)* have entered into agreement with the Inland Revenue that the outcome of other proceedings of a private law nature shall be taken as determinative of their own dispute or *(b)* have formally endorsed other proceedings of a public law nature which as a matter of the law are taken as determinative of their own dispute, whether or not the Inland Revenue agrees;

(2) if it is his policy that taxpayers in dispute with the Inland Revenue should obtain immunity from retrospective legislation as from some particular point in legal proceedings; and if he will specify from which point in legal proceedings such immunity should take effect.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Where, following a successful challenge in the courts, retrospective legislation is introduced to restore the previous understanding of the law, it has long been the Government's policy that the successful litigant should not be deprived of the benefit of the court judgment in his favour. Where other taxpayers have agreed with the Revenue that an action will be regarded as a test case and that they will also benefit from any decision against the Revenue, it is the Government's policy that those taxpayers should also not be affected by any retrospective amendment to the law.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Government policy in relation to retrospective tax legislation prevents the Government from introducing new measures for a retrospective change in the law in its own favour.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Where it is discovered that the tax law does not have the effect that the Government and taxpayers generally thought it had, there are circumstances in which it is right to introduce legislation to restore the position retrospectively to what it was thought to be. This is done

only in exceptional circumstances and where the Government consider such action is necessary to protect the interests of the general body of taxpayers.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Government policy in relation to retrospective tax legislation applies to *(a)* public law proceedings, *(b)* private law proceedings, *(c)* appeals against assessment and *(d)* restitution claims.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The application of the Government's policy will depend on the precise circumstances of any particular proceedings.

## Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had since 1989 about the non-availability of mortgage interest tax relief for persons who are not in the mortgage interest relief at source scheme and whose income has fallen below the tax threshold; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Treasury Ministers have received a few such representations.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of home buyers benefiting from the mortgage interest tax relief facility open to lenders to operate separate loan accounts for qualifying and non-qualifying parts of their loans; what is his estimate of the number of lenders operating such a facility; and what plans he has to encourage publicity for such arrangements.

**Mr. Dorrell:** These arrangements are for borrowers and lenders to agree between themselves. We have no estimates either of the number of lenders offering the facility or the number of borrowers taking advantage of it. Inland Revenue guidance notes to lenders in the MIRAS scheme remind them that they can operate separate loan accounts if they wish. In July, the Inland Revenue intends to publish a revised version of its leaflet aimed at borrowers, and this will refer to these arrangements.

## Relocation Expenses

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assistance with housing costs is given to civil servants who are posted from one part of the United Kingdom to another.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Civil servants in mobile grades who are compulsorily transferred from one location to another and who, as a result, have to move house, are given a range of financial assistance with the costs of that move. This assistance includes help with legal and estate agents fees, removal costs and the interest cost of bridging loans, and also an advance of salary for the purchase of a home. Where staff are moving to an area where housing costs are higher they may also receive help with some of the additional mortgage costs. Staff may also receive help with temporary accommodation and paid leave to search for a home and supervise the removal. In addition, Departments have discretion to offer staff the services of a relocation company.

## Rent-a-room Scheme

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of rooms which will be brought into letting in consequence of the rent-a-room scheme, the average rents for such lettings, and the cost in revenue forgone as a result of the proposed exemption from income tax of the £3,250 received for such lettings *(a)* in 1992-93 and *(b)* in a full financial year; and if he will estimate the regional breakdown of such lettings.

**Mr. Dorrell:** We hope that many people will be encouraged to let rooms by the rent-a-room scheme. But it is not possible to make estimates of the actual number of new lettings which will be generated by the scheme. It follows that there is no information about the average rents of likely new lettings, nor their regional breakdown.

## Taxation

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to require Inland Revenue not to tax bar staff on the value of employer-provided taxis home from work.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have no plans to do so. It is a general principle of the United Kingdom tax system that the cost of travel between home and work is a personal expense for which there is no tax relief. Where an employer meets such costs they are generally taxable. It would be inappropriate to single out bar staff for special treatment.

## Tax Changes

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1992 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), on 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *123-24*.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds announced in the 1992 Budget are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice, retention of the regime indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

*Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime*

| *Range of individuals income in 1992-93 £* | *Number of individuals 1992-93[1] Million* | *Total reduction £ million* | *Average reduction £ per annum* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 5,000 | 3·1 | 500 | 150 |
| 5,000 to 10,000 | 7·9 | 3,200 | 400 |
| 10,000 to 15,000 | 6·2 | 4,500 | 730 |
| 15,000 to 20,000 | 4·1 | 4,300 | 1,060 |
| 20,000 to 30,000 | 3·2 | 5,000 | 1,590 |
| 30,000 to 50,000 | 1·2 | 3,600 | 2,960 |
| 50,000 to 80,000 | 0·35 | 3,100 | 9,200 |
| Over 80,000 | 0·15 | 7,200 | 46,000 |
| TOTAL | 26·2 | 31,400 | 1,200 |

[1] Individuals liable to income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

### Landowners (Tax Exemption)

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, column *2*, what was the cost to the Exchequer of the exemption from inheritance tax and capital transfer tax given to six landowners in Cumbria who agreed to maintain and preserve their property and provide reasonable public access to it for each year since the exemptions were granted.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* Estimates of the cost of conditionally exempting land and buildings were given for the whole United Kingdom in my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 2 June at column *399*. These figures represented a broad judgment of the likely overall cost of the exemption and were subject to a large margin of error.

Where exemption is given, it is not necessary to establish the value of individual properties, and so it is not possible to give equivalent estimates for the cost of exempting the small number of properties involved in Cumbria.

In addition, the normal rules of confidentiality would prevent the disclosure of annual estimates for Cumbria, since these would enable the tax position of particular taxpayers to be identified.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Child Care

34. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is his latest information on demand for nursery provision in the House.

35. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what progress has been made towards the establishment of a day nursery in the Palace of Westminster.

37. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what proposals there are for the introduction of crèche facilities for the use of the families of hon. Members and staff in the House.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what representations he has received regarding the setting up of a crèche in the Palace of Westminster.

**Mr. Beith:** In its report of last Session, "New Parliamentary Building (Phase 2) The Sketch Plan"—HC 269-I—the Accommodation and Works Committee foresaw no accommodation suitable for a child care facility becoming available in the phase 2 building and concluded:

"any crèche . . . would have to be located elsewhere in the parliamentary estate".

It was anticipated that other space, in some cases more appropriately located, could be found without undue delay in other buildings; and the Committee called upon its successor to take up the issue as a high priority. In accordance with a request from the Commission, it is expected that the Accommodation and Works Committee will continue to seek to identify an appropriate location for such a facility.

Accommodation apart, responsibility for the provision of any child care facility falls to the Establishment Officers' Committee of the Board of Management and to the Administration Committee. Those two committees, the former acting on behalf of the Departments of the House and the latter on behalf of Members and their staff, continue to monitor developments in child care provision. They are advised by the Establishment Office, which keeps in touch with developments taking place in Whitehall, Westminster and elsewhere. A number of possible options in relation to the provision of child care facilities in the Westminster area have recently been proposed and are being investigated.

Once the feasibility of providing such a service is known and its size, nature and location identified, a survey of potential demand will be conducted.

### Stationery

36. **Mr. Barns:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column *144*, if he has any proposals to establish a shop within the main building of the Palace of Westminster to sell stationery.

**Mr. Beith:** I am unable to add significantly to my earlier reply to which the hon. Member referred in his question. Until the phase 2 building is completed, accommodation within the main building will continue to be under great pressure and any proposal for new facilities would need to be carefully examined by the relevant Committee.

### Visitors' Facilities

38. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what representations he has received about facilities for visitors to the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Beith:** No such representations have been received this Parliament, but I am aware of the representations made by the hon. Member and others in the previous Parliament. If he has any specific concern, he should in the first instant raise it with the Serjeant at Arms or the Director of Catering Services, or with the Chairman of the appropriate domestic Committee.

### Paper Recycling

39. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how much paper he estimates is used in the Palace of Westminster each year; and what arrangements are made for its recycling.

**Mr. Beith:** It is not possible to make any sensible estimate of the amount of paper used in the Palace of Westminster each year. I understand that non-confidential waste paper is collected by a contractor for recycling.

### Offices

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many right hon. and hon. Members now have single offices in *(a)* the Palace and *(b)* other office buildings.

**Mr. Beith:** There are 238 Members with single rooms in the Palace and 171 Members with single rooms in the outbuildings.

### Phase 2

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what is the current situation in respect of the phase 2 development.

**Mr. Beith:** Progress is being made on the design of the building and negotiations are continuing on the issues raised by the Accommodation and Works Committee in its two reports. There is close contact with London Underground and the Department of Transport on the situation concerning the Jubilee line extension. The Accommodation and Works Committee is expected to give priority to the consideration of developments concerning phase 2 as soon as it meets.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Porton Down

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what species of laboratory animals are being used for the toxicity of organophosphates at the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down; and how many have been used in this research since 1989;

(2) if he will list the types of nerve gases being tested on animals at the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down; and what other research projects linked to nerve gases involving animals are also being conducted at this establishment;

(3) how many non-human primates were used in nerve gas experiments at the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down, *(a)* for the testing of antidotes and *(b)* for other purposes, in each year since 1987.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, under which the use of living animals in research may be authorised. It is not the practice to give details of research at individual establishments which we receive in the course of discharging that responsibility.

### Security Services

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to ensure that the security services become subject to Parliament's scrutiny; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to a question from the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 13 May 1992, at column *103*.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The Department does not at present employ any consultants for market testing.

### Proxy Votes

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to monitor the exercising of proxy votes by the proprietors, management and staff of residential care or nursing homes on behalf of residents of such homes.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** No one may vote as proxy at the same parliamentary election in any constituency, or at the same local government election in any electoral area, on behalf of more than two people to whom he or she is not closely related. Electoral registration officers will grant applications to vote by proxy only if they are satisfied that they meet the requirements set out in the Representation of the People Act 1985; and, where practicable, they must notify the elector that the application has been granted. The electoral registration officer is empowered to make inquiries at such times as he thinks fit to see whether there has been a material change in the circumstances of an elector who votes by proxy. Absent voting arrangements will be considered as part of our post-election review of electoral law.

### Parole

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will abolish the restricted policy on parole which applies to those sentenced to more than five years for an offence involving violence, sex, arson or drugs; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I have recently completed a review of the operation of the restricted policy which applies to those sentenced to more than five years for an offence involving violence, sex, arson or drugs. This policy has the general effect of restricting parole eligibility to a few months at the end of sentence and was waived only in exceptional circumstances. The impending abolition of the policy was announced in the White Paper "Crime Justice and Protecting the Public", published in February 1990, which set out proposals for a wide change to new parole procedures in all cases to make sure that the length of sentence served would be more closely related to the length of sentence imposed by the court. I have decided that the restricted policy should now end for all prisoners. The Parole Board will, of course, continue to review each case carefully to ensure that full and proper account is taken of the need to protect the public in all its discussions.

### Squatting

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will set out the decisions he has taken following the expiry of the consultation period for his departmental paper on squatting; and if he will give the dates when these decisions were taken;

(2) what progress is being made on his consultations on squatting; and whether he still proposes that squatting shall become a criminal offence.

**Mr. Jack:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) on 17 June, at column *522*.

### Operation Container

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers have earned more than *(a)* £1,000, *(b)* £2,000 and *(c)* £5,000 in overtime carrying out duties for Operation Container.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Voting

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of proxy vote applications registered in each constituency at the time of *(a)* the 1987 general election and *(b)* the 1992 general election.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 12 May, at column *61*.

## TRANSPORT

### Rail Services, Humberside

6. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about rail services to Grimsby and Cleethorpes.

**Mr. Freeman:** I have already received a delegation of hon. Members; the House debated this matter on 17 June; and I shall be meeting the hon. Member shortly. I have also received four letters from members of the public.

### Car Ownership

12. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the projected increase in car ownership in Greater London over the next five years.

**Mr. Norris:** Car ownership in London is forecast to increase by between 10 and 14 per cent. from 1991 to 1996.

### Rail Privatisation

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his White Paper on railway privatisation.

**Mr. Freeman:** I hope to publish the White Paper on railway privatisation before the House rises for the summer recess.

26. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will include protection for British Rail pensions and British Rail pensioner's concessionary travel entitlements in his proposals for rail privatisation.

**Mr. Freeman:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport gave an assurance during the Second Reading debate on the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill on 18 May, *Official Report*, column 23, that the pension entitlements of existing contributors and past employees of the rail industry will be properly safeguarded on the privatisation of British Rail.

I gave a similar assurance in respect of pensioners' concessionary travel entitlements during the Committee stage of that Bill on 16 June.

### Light Rapid Transit Schemes

15. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budget provision exists for light rapid transit schemes in 1992-93; and what is planned for 1993-94.

**Mr. Freeman:** There is no budget provision specifically reserved for light rail schemes. However, in 1992-93 we are providing resources of at least £50 million for such schemes. We plan to provide at least £53 million in 1993-94.

### Road and Rail Infrastructure

16. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an official visit to east London and Essex to study the current state of road and rail infrastructure.

**Mr. Norris:** I have no immediate plans to do so. I am, however, well aware of the situation concerning the improving state of road and rail infrastructure in east London and Essex. We are pressing ahead with investment in the area. The Queen Elizabeth II bridge at Dartford has relieved congestion on the M25 and we opened the new east London traffic control system last February. The modernisation of the Central line is now under way and work has started on resignalling of the Great Eastern line out of Liverpool Street station.

### Network SouthEast

17. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of the British Rail board to discuss Network SouthEast; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss current issues on Network SouthEast and on the railways as a whole.

### Carlisle Bypass

18. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the construction of the Carlisle bypass will start.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The proposals for the Carlisle southern bypass scheme are expected to be ready for a public consultation in spring 1993. It is too early to say when construction will start.

### Bypasses

19. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses have been planned and built by this Department in the last five years; and how many more are in the final stages of planning.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Between 1987-88 and 1991-92 the Department completed the construction of 69 bypasses on

national roads in England. At present, there are a further 28 bypasses under construction and 148 in preparation, of which 34 have passed the public inquiry stage.

**Disabled People (Transport)**

20. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about transport for the disabled and his published guide "Door to Door"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** We are in touch with a wide range of disability organisations, local authorities, transport operators and vehicle manufacturers on all matters relating to transport and disability. We work particularly closely with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee which was set up under the Transport Act 1985 to offer advice to the Secretary of State in this area.

The Department's disability unit has recently published its annual report which sets out our current initiatives in this area. I have sent copies to all Members of the House and I will ensure that further copies are placed in the Library.

"Door to Door", a guide to transport for people with disabilities, produced by my Department, is now in its third edition and a new fourth edition will be published later this summer. The publication offers advice on all aspects of personal mobility, public transport and specialist services for people with disabilities and provides useful contacts for further advice.

As soon as the new edition is published, I will ensure that copies are placed in the Library.

**Roads (Environmental Protection)**

21. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to ensure that the natural environment is protected when new roads are built and existing roads improved.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson).

**Traffic, London**

22. **Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's current estimates of the percentage growth of traffic on London's roads by the year 2025.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department does not forecast traffic growth in London as a whole over this length of time. Specific forecasts are made for individual trunk road schemes. These are generally lower than the national road traffic forecasts, which cover the whole of Great Britain.

**Village Speed Limits**

23. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about his proposals to reduce the speed of vehicles in villages.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** A working group drawn from the County Surveyors Society, the Department of Transport, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office has been considering a range of measures to constrain vehicle speeds through villages. A number of schemes to be introduced on main roads through villages will be monitored over the coming months to assess their effectiveness in keeping speeds down, and improving safety and the quality of life in rural communities.

Earlier this month the working group published an interim report which has been circulated to county surveyors and others. The response so far has confirmed that there is widespread support for the steps being taken to tackle this problem.

**A1**

24. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the upgrading of the A1 north of Newcastle.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Since taking up office following the general election we have received a small number of representations about upgrading the A1 north of Newcastle.

**Blackened Windows**

25. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about vehicles with blackened windows which prevent identification of the occupants; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** None. A legal requirement governing the level of light transmission for motor vehicle glass is specified in the Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986. For vehicles first used from 1 June 1978 this is at least 70 per cent. transmittance with 75 per cent. transmittance for windscreens of vehicles first used from 1 April 1985. These limits effectively preclude the use of blackened glass.

**Mersey Tunnels**

27. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards the Mersey tunnels' tolls.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** We believe it is reasonable that tolls at estuarial crossings should where possible cover the costs and debts of those crossings. The application of that principle to the Mersey tunnels must take account of the relevant legislation, which gives the Merseyside passenger transport authority responsibility for the financial management of the tunnels and, hence, for proposing the level of tolls.

**Buses**

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about quality of service objectives for London Transport's bus services.

**Mr. Norris:** My right hon. Friend has today written to the chairman of London Transport, setting new quality of service objectives for LT's bus services, including tendered routes, to be attained by the end of March 1994, with interim targets for March 1993. LT has made excellent progress in improving its bus service for passengers since the objectives were last set, in 1989. The new targets will build on this achievement and keep up momentum to improve performance still further in anticipation of deregulation.

The new targets are as follows, with current targets also given for comparison.

Per cent.

| Target | 1992-93 | 1993-94 | (Present) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of scheduled mileage operated (excluding miles lost through traffic congestion) | >98·5 | >98·5 | (98) |
| *On high frequency route* | | | |
| Excess waiting time—difference between scheduled waiting time and actual waiting time | <1·75 mins | <1·6 mins | (New target) |
| *On low frequency routes* | | | |
| Percentage of buses arriving on time—not more than 2 mins early or 5 mins late | >67·0 | >68·0 | (65) |
| *On low frequency routes* | | | |
| Percentage of buses arriving more than 2 mins early | <5·5 | <4·5 | (6) |
| Internal and external cleanliness of vehicles, quality of passenger information and condition of bus stops | LT to draw up customer satisfaction surveys to assess performance in these areas | | |
| *LT telephone enquiry service* | | | |
| Percentage of calls to be answered within 30 secs | >76·0 | >78·0 | (75) |
| Percentage of calls to receive engaged tone | <10·0 | <10·0 | (10) |

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support his Department has given for the greater use of buses in urban areas.

**Mr. Freeman:** We strongly support measures to enable buses to provide a better service and are funding a £10 million programme of demonstration projects over this year and next.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the average speed of buses in London; and what steps are being taken to accord more priority to buses in London.

**Mr. Norris:** Bus speeds in London vary considerably by route and time of day. An analysis of scheduled journey times for selected routes indicates that, on a week day, average speeds range between 6 and 13 miles mph. The schedules allow time for passengers to board and alight.

London Transport's bus priority steering group was set up in October 1990 to encourage all London boroughs to put forward positive proposals to help buses in traffic-congested areas. A number of promising schemes are now coming forward.

As part of a Government initiative to promote bus priority, announced in December 1991, schemes in Camden, Ealing, Haringey, Newham and Tower Hamlets have, in total, been allocated £700,000 in supplementary credit approvals—SCA. A bid for SCA to assist in implementing a comprehensive bus priority proposal in six boroughs in the south and west of London is currently being considered.

In December 1991, the Government also issued local transport note 1/91, "Keeping Buses Moving", which contains comprehensive advice to encourage local authorities to introduce more bus priority measures.

## M4

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on the widening of the M4.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Widening of the short length of M4 between junctions 4b—M25—and 5—A4—is planned to start early in 1993. Investigations into the need for and feasibility of widening other lengths are at too early a stage to forecast start of works dates.

## A570

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the contract for resurfacing the A570 from the M58 to Southport was approved; what target dates were set for commencing and completing the work; whether any financial penalty will be imposed if targets are not met; and when he now expects work to be completed.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Maintenance of this stretch of the A570 involves a series of contracts. Two minor ones were carried out in 1991 and completed on time.

Of the two carried out so far in 1992, one in Ormskirk started on 30 March and finished on 14 June, some five weeks later than we planned when letting the contract. The other, between Ormskirk and the M58 started on 24 February and should finish in the next few days, some seven weeks later than we planned.

Because of uncertain ground conditions we could not be sure in advance how much work the contractors would need to carry out. It was not therefore appropriate to use our lane rental arrangements which include a predetermined financial penalty for each day's late completion. However, the contracts provide for payments under the standard liquidated damage clause.

Further A570 resurfacing works are planned later this summer, in Ormskirk and south of the town.

## A565

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold discussions with the metropolitan borough of Sefton and Lancashire county council regarding the possible A565 Water Lane bypass.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Our north-west network management division will gladly hold discussions if the councils want them.

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he anticipates reaching a decision on the detrunking of the A565 Water Lane.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** We will publish the required statutory proposals if Sefton borough council and Lancashire county council agree that the A565 should be detrunked.

### Transpennine Links

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the study of transpennine links between the north-east and north-west has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 9 June at column *114*. I have nothing to add at present.

### River Thames

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the level of passenger traffic on the Thames in London; and what steps he is taking to increase the use of the Thames for passenger transport.

**Mr. Norris:** From the information available to my Department, current usage of the riverbus service amounted to 400,000 passenger trips in 1991. In 1990—the latest year for which figures are available—the estimated total of passenger trips on Thames pleasure boat services was 2·5 million, with a further 2 million using the Woolwich ferry.

I am keen to encourage greater use of the River Thames for freight as well as passengers. My officials will continue their discussions with river users and their representatives to explore the potential for development.

### European Aviation

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the European aviation market is fully liberalised, and that any agreement does not allow individual member states to prevent airlines from setting market fares.

**Mr. Norris:** My right hon. Friend attended the EC Transport Council in Luxembourg on 22 June, at which an historic agreement on aviation liberalisation was concluded. This was the culmination of a 10-year process, in which the Government have been in the lead throughout.

We welcome the agreement, which will lead to a liberal aviation market from the beginning of next year, sweeping away traditional restrictions on market entry and setting fares, and encouraging true competition. This will enable Community air carriers to mount services and set fares according to their own commercial judgment, stimulating improved services and lower fares. There are tightly drawn safeguards to protect the consumer from excessively high and other anti-competitive fares.

The agreement is good news for the consumer and for competitive airlines.

### London Taxis

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the working party on taxis in London; and when he expects the working party to report its recommendations.

**Mr. Norris:** The working party on the safety of users of taxis and minicabs in London has now reported to me. I am studying the report with interest and will arrange its publication shortly.

### Crewe-Holyhead Rail Link

**Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to secure European finance for the upgrading of the Crewe to Holyhead rail link.

**Mr. Freeman:** It would be for British Rail, in conjunction with local authorities as appropriate, to apply for European funding of any upgrading of the Crewe to Holyhead line. British Rail is currently upgrading the line to allow 90 mph running. It is financing this itself. It has no plans at present for any further upgrading of the line.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on Monday 2 March 1992 to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), on 2 March 1992, at columns *63-64*.

### Motorway Construction

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the public consultation process prior to the construction of new motorways.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The procedures have been developed under successive Governments over the last 20 years. They give the public the opportunity to comment on the options in the early stages of preparation.

### Investment Appraisal

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reach firm conclusions on the report of the role of investment appraisal in road and rail transport; and if he is satisfied that each mode of transport is given comparable assessment within that report.

**Mr. Freeman:** This paper described the technical procedures, and their background, at present used or required by the Department of Transport in appraising proposed investments in road and rail transport. The paper attracted helpful comments from many sources. I am quite satisfied with the present rules for providing grants to public transport. However, I also accept that there may be scope for the wider use of full cost-benefit analysis in the appraisal of public transport infrastructure investments. The Department is therefore now developing further guidance on the use of cost-benefit analysis for the appraisal of, in particular, urban public transport infrastructure.

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the agreed completion date of the train sets able to run through-train services via the channel tunnel when investment in them was approved; and what is the current expected completion date.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail announced in December 1989 that it, in conjunction with the French and Belgian

railways, had placed the order for intercapital train sets to run between London and Paris and Brussels from June 1993. The railways now expect services to build up during the first half of 1994. When the railways announced the order of the north of London train sets in November 1991, they stated that these train sets, which will be built as a follow-on order from the intercapitals, were expected to come into service in 1995. This date has not changed.

### BR Locomotives

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of investment in new locomotives he has authorised for British Rail.

**Mr. Freeman:** The level and timing of British Rail's investment in new locomotives are determined by operational requirements and available resources. New locomotives are not always required to replace those withdrawn: the regional railways sector has replaced virtually all its loco-hauled services with the faster and more efficient class 158 diesel multiple units.

Locomotive builds authorised and yet to be fully completed are 34 high-speed train sets and 37 class 92 locomotives for channel tunnel services; and 100 class 60 locomotives for domestic freight services, at a total cost of over £700 million at current prices.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department of Transport and its agencies had one member of staff registered as disabled in grades 1 to 7 at June 1992, representing 0·1 per cent. of these grades.

Overall, 201 of the Department's staff, representing 1·3 per cent. of the total, are registered disabled.

### Humber Bridge

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the nature and duration of the Government grant which is being paid to halt the growth in the Humber bridge debt.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the then Secretary of State for Transport, gave on 6 February on transport cash and running cost limits. A grant of £7·6 million, under the authority of the Appropriation Act, was paid for the financial year 1991-92 to avoid the capitalisation of unpaid interest payments. The amount of grant for 1992-93 will be determined having regard to the outcome of the board's financial position in the year: provision has been made in the estimates for £43·5 million. Grant will need to be paid until Government legislation is in place.

### USA-UK Air Agreement

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in reviewing the United States of America-United Kingdom bilateral air agreement; whether he will consider negotiating future agreements with the United States of America on a European basis; and what steps he is taking to ensure that more transatlantic services are made available from airports other than Heathrow and Gatwick.

**Mr. Norris:** Discussions with the US Government are continuing about the possibilities for the liberalisation of transatlantic air services. Our aim is to remove obstacles to fair competition between airlines, and to remove unnecessary regulation.

There may ultimately be a role for the European Community in aviation negotiations with third countries. Once the single market in aviation is established and we get used to operating in and from it, a clearer need for collective negotiations may develop. It will be important not to prejudice the present tried and tested bilateral relationships by attempting to negotiate prematurely at Community level.

Making more transatlantic services available to airports other than Heathrow and Gatwick is something we have in mind as we pursue our negotiations with the Americans. The last round of discussions covered the possibilities for opening up additional opportunities for both sides, including new routes, without going into the detail of specific services.

### Air Navigation Order 1989

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on how many occasions, in the last year for which figures are available, action was taken to prosecute airlines for contravention of article 88 of the Air Navigation Order 1989;

(2) what means he uses to enforce regulations designated by article 88 of the Air Navigation Order 1989, in respect of foreign-registered airlines;

(3) what sanctions are available against airlines which persistently fail to meet requirements laid down by article 88 of the Air Navigation Order 1989.

**Mr. Norris:** Article 67 of the order enables the Secretary of State to revoke, suspend or vary any permit issued under article 88. Article 99 provides that any contravention of the order may be treated as a prosecutable offence. Where there is prime faciae evidence of a breach of article 88, the Secretary of State will investigate, normally with the help of the Civil Aviation Authority. If he is then satisfied that a breach has occurred, he may have recourse to the penalties provided under articles 67 and 99 of the Air Navigation Order. No central records of prosecutions under article 88 are maintained, though it is rare for reported breaches to require prosecution action. It is more usual for action to take the form of a written warning for first offenders, or, in the case of more persistent offenders or where a more serious breach has occurred, a suspension, revocation or variation of the article 88 permit.

## WALES

### Employment Statistics

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of jobs created in mid-Glamorgan between 1984 and 1989; how many mining jobs were lost in the period 1984-89; and how many of the jobs created between 1984 and 1989 were full-time.

**Mr. David Hunt:** While comprehensive information on total jobs created or lost is not available, it is estimated that the number of employees employed in mid-Glamorgan rose by 13,300 between September 1984 and September 1989; full-time employees accounted for 3,000 of this increase. During the same period, the number of employees employed in deep and opencast coal mining is estimated to have fallen by 10,000.
(Source: Censuses of Employment).

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs there were in mid-Glamorgan in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1989.

**Mr. David Hunt:** It is estimated that there were 186,000 and 165,000 employees in employment in mid-Glamorgan in 1978 and 1989 respectively.

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the job estimate for mid-Glamorgan during the 1990s in the mid-Glamorgan county council economic report.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am aware that a report on mid-Glamorgan has been produced for the consideration of the county council. My Department has obtained a copy and is studying it.

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate his Department has made of the number of jobs required for mid-Glamorgan during the 1990s to reduce unemployment to 1990 levels.

**Mr. David Hunt:** My Department has made no such estimate.

## Local Government Reorganisation

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received representations from Cymdeithas Cynghorau Cemaes concerning the reorganisation of local government in Wales; and when he intends to respond to such representations.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Yes, I have received representations from Cymdeithas Cynghorau Cemaes. I am considering all such representations and will announce my conclusions in a White Paper later this year.

## Gross Domestic Product

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his estimate is of the gross domestic product of *(a)* mid-Glamorgan, *(b)* south Glamorgan, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* the United Kingdom in 1979 and the latest available date.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Estimates of the gross domestic product at current prices are given in the table:

*£ million*

| | *1979* | *1989* | *[1]1990* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mid Glamorgan | 1,217 | 2,920 | n/a |
| South Glamorgan | 1,183 | 3,247 | n/a |
| Wales | 7,073 | 18,443 | 20,053 |
| United Kingdom[2] | 166,189 | 430,290 | 470,820 |

*Source:* Central Statistical Office
[1]Provisional
[2]Excluding the continental shelf and statistical discrepancy

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of officers in grades, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The details, based on staff in post figures at 31 March 1992, are given in the table:

| *Grade* | *Women* | *Per Cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | — | — |
| 2 | — | — |
| 3 | 1 | 9 |
| 4 | 1 | 17 |
| 5 | 10 | 15 |
| 6 | 15 | 17 |
| 7 | 35 | 20 |
| Departmental total | 1,235 | 49 |

*Notes:*
1. Includes equivalent professional grades.
2. Includes agency and industrial staff. Part-time staff count as one unit.

## Businesses

**Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many businesses there are in mid-Glamorgan; what percentage of these businesses are *(a)* retailing, *(b)* construction and *(c)* catering businesses; and what are the equivalent percentages for the United Kingdom.

**Mr. David Hunt:** According to the stock of businesses registered for VAT there were 10,500 businesses in Mid Glamorgan at the end of 1990. The table shows the percentages in each of the requested sub-categories:

| *Sub category* | *Percentage of total businesses* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Mid Glamorgan* | *United Kingdom* |
| Retailing | 22 | 15 |
| Construction | 19 | 16 |
| Catering | 13 | 8 |

*Source:* Employment Department.

## County Council elections

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the likely total cost of the county council elections which are due to take place in 1993.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I have made no such estimate. In the financial year 1989-90, the last year in which county council elections took place, counties recorded current expenditure of £1 million on council elections.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement concerning the financial regime for Welsh local authorities for the year 1993-94.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies that I gave on 22 May to the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) at column *277* and to the hon. Gentleman himself on 4 June at *611*.

## Syringes

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received and what studies he has undertaken concerning the problem of injuries sustained to individuals by discarded syringes; and if he will take steps to ensure that such equipment is disposed of responsibly.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am not aware of any recent representations about injuries caused by discarded syringes, nor have I undertaken any study. Disposal of needles and syringes used in medical, dental and veterinary establishments in the responsibility of those individual establishments. In relation to needles and syringes used by individuals in the community, such as diabetics, advice on safe disposal has been issued to health and local authorities.

Drug misusing injectors taking part in needle-exchange schemes are given special containers and are encouraged to return used equipment to reception points. They and other drug users are given advice on how to dispose of used needles safely.

## Water Disconnections

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the chairman of Welsh Water concerning the cutting off of domestic water supplies; and when he next proposes to meet him.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I regularly discuss issues of mutual interest with the chairman of Welsh Water plc.

## Economic Planning Council

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make a statement concerning his plans to set up an economic planning council for Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** A consultation paper seeking views on how the council would operate will be issued in the near future.

## Inmos

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the dates of all contacts and meetings he has initiated with DG XIII and DG XVI to discuss the future of Inmos Newport;

(2) what proposals he has received from the European Commission to relocate Inmos Newport to another site in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given today by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

## Travellers' Sites

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet Queensferry community council to discuss the location of transit sites for travellers.

**Mr. David Hunt:** No. The location of sites is primarily a matter for Clwyd county council in consultation with the district council.

## Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 3 March 1992, at column *133*.

## Farmers (Incentive Payments)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the increase in the level of incentive payments granted to farmers in Wales since 1976 in real terms.

**Mr. David Hunt** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Complete information on the level of assistance granted to farmers in Wales is not available, because figures for some elements of support, notably intervention expenditure and variable premium payments, are not separately available for Wales. Based on identifiable expenditure on farming in Wales the figures, in real terms, are given in the table:

*Total identifiable payments (in real terms £ million 1976)*

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1976 | 20 |
| 1977 | 19 |
| 1978 | 20 |
| 1979 | 22 |
| 1980 | 23 |
| 1981 | 30 |
| 1982 | 31 |
| 1983 | 40 |
| 1984 | 34 |
| 1985 | 36 |
| 1986 | 27 |
| 1987 | 29 |
| 1988 | 28 |
| 1989 | 29 |
| 1990 | 33 |
| 1991 | 41 |

## Ministerial Titles

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) for what reason the ministerial title of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is being changed to Parliamentary Secretary; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on departmental efficiency of one of his departmental Ministers carrying a different title of Parliamentary Secretary for internal correspondence, while continuing to be Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for dealings with the public.

**Mr. David Hunt:** How, for clarity and euphony, Ministers wish to be referred to within Departments is a matter for them. Efficiency will at worst be unaffected and may be marginally improved.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the cost of the change of title of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to Parliamentary Secretary.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The cost of promulgating the decision was around £2·28.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### State Veterinary Service

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many State Veterinary Service staff there were in each year since 1985 in the categories *(a)* qualified veterinarians, *(b)* technical and scientific, *(c)* administrative and *(d)* others.

**Mr. Soames:** Since 1985 the structure of the State Veterinary Service has changed several times. For example, the Central Veterinary Laboratory, which formed part of the State Veterinary Service, attained agency status in April 1990. In order to allow direct comparisons, the figures provided relate to veterinary, technical and scientific staff in headquarters, the field and investigation services only. The CVL figures are not incorporated in this return.

| | *Qualified veterinarians* | *Technical/ scientific* | *Admin staff* | *Others* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| As at 1 January 1985 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— |
| As at 1 January 1986 | 415 | 353 | — | 50·0 |
| As at 1 January 1987 | 350 | 339 | — | 51·5 |
| As at 1 January 1988 | 374·5 | 337 | — | 46·5 |
| As at 1 January 1989 | 376·5 | 331 | — | 41·5 |
| As at 1 January 1990 | 393·5 | 373·5 | 10·5 | 43·5 |
| As at 1 January 1991 | 408 | 392·5 | 14·5 | 48·5 |
| As at 1 January 1992 | 414·5 | 383·5 | 14·5 | 48·5 |

[1] Figures not readily available.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of confirmed cases of BSE in each county or region in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1992 to the latest available date.

**Mr. Gummer:** The number of cases confirmed for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland from 3 January 1992 to 19 June 1992 is as follows:

| *County-region* | *Confirmed cases* |
|---|---|
| England: | |
| Avon | 291 |
| Bedfordshire | 39 |
| Berkshire | 79 |
| Buckinghamshire | 130 |
| Cambridgeshire | 49 |
| Cheshire | 646 |
| Cleveland | 19 |
| Cornwall | 1,212 |
| Cumbria | 537 |
| Derbyshire | 432 |
| Devon | 1,604 |
| Dorset | 1,067 |
| Durham | 68 |
| Essex | 69 |
| Gloucestershire | 274 |
| Hampshire | 326 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 259 |
| Hertfordshire | 37 |
| Humberside | 63 |
| Isle of Wight | 70 |
| Kent | 205 |
| Lancashire | 553 |
| Leicestershire | 293 |
| Lincolnshire | 93 |
| London | 13 |
| Manchester | 18 |
| Merseyside | 20 |
| Norfolk | 407 |
| Northamptonshire | 133 |
| Northumberland | 107 |
| Nottinghamshire | 87 |
| Oxfordshire | 255 |
| Salop | 405 |
| Somerset | 1,381 |
| Staffordshire | 700 |
| Suffolk | 172 |
| Surrey | 133 |
| Sussex East | 196 |
| Sussex West | 331 |
| Tyne and Wear | 5 |
| Warwickshire | 148 |
| West Midlands | 11 |
| Wiltshire | 718 |
| Yorkshire North | 668 |
| Yorkshire South | 47 |
| Yorkshire West | 93 |
| Wales: | |
| Clwyd | 262 |
| Dyfed | 908 |
| Glamorgan Mid | 18 |
| Glamorgan South | 54 |
| Glamorgan West | 12 |
| Gwent | 109 |
| Gwynedd | 61 |
| Powys | 209 |
| Scotland: | |
| Borders | 44 |
| Central | 12 |
| Dumfries | 229 |
| Fife | 29 |
| Grampian | 102 |
| Highland | 23 |
| Lothian | 22 |
| Orkney | 7 |
| Shetland | 2 |
| Strathclyde | 167 |
| Tayside | 38 |
| Western Isles | 0 |
| Northern Ireland: | |
| Antrim | 43 |
| Armagh | 5 |
| Down | 17 |
| Fermanagh | 7 |
| Londonderry | 17 |
| Tyrone | 21 |

### Fishing Industry

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about objective 6 of the EC regional aid programme; and how it will be able to help communities such as Lowestoft affected by a future decline in fishing.

**Mr. Curry:** The EC Commission has not yet produced its detailed proposals for objective 6 or elaborated on how it will propose to define fisheries-dependent areas in that context.

### Fur Factory Farms

**Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will prohibit the keeping of mink and fox in fur factory farms on expiry of the Mink Keeping Order 1987.

**Mr. Soames:** Agriculture departments issue licences under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987 to establishments keeping mink under secure conditions, as set out in the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended. The purpose of the order is to prevent the escape of mink into the wild, where they would be destructive pests, and not to regulate fur-farming practices. No similar order exists to place security requirements on the keeping of foxes. The Mink (Keeping) Order expires on 31 December 1992 and a consultation exercise will take place this summer to seek the views of interested organisations on future arrangements for the secure keeping of mink and any possible extension of the controls to other species.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Curry:** The merchant bankers Leopold Joseph and Sons Ltd. were employed to assist in the preparation of proposals for the expansion of areas to be market tested, following publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality". The resulting programme is still under consideration.

### Animal Exports

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* lambs, *(b)* sheep, *(c)* pigs, *(d)* calves, *(e)* bulls over six months, *(f)* heifers over six months and *(g)* cull cows were exported live from the United Kingdom for (i) fattening and (ii) immediate slaughter in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 24 June at column *240*.

### Bananas

**Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he can report on discussions with the EC on the creation of a banana quota for the Leeward Islands.

**Mr. Curry:** The European Commission has recently published a working paper which looks at ways of arranging the post-1992 European banana market. This paper leaves many questions unanswered and member states will be examining the possible implications of the Commission's approach in detail.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Glass (Safety)

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many accidents were caused by furniture constructed in whole or part from glass as listed in the home accident surveillance system for *(a)* 1981, *(b)* 1983, *(c)* 1985, *(d)* 1987 and *(e)* 1989.

**Mr. Leigh:** The Department's home accident surveillance scheme records the following accidents involving furniture with glass in its construction. The data do not, in all cases, identify whether glass, or some other component of the furniture, caused the accident.

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1981 | 263 |
| 1983 | 277 |
| 1985 | 309 |
| 1987 | 286 |
| 1989 | 333 |

*Note:* Figures are not available for England and Wales only.

### Ozone-destroying Chemicals

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will undertake to prevent an increase in United Kingdom production or release to the atmosphere of hydrochlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** The Government have already agreed that the EC should press for controls on production and use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons. It is envisaged that the matter will also be discussed when the Montreal protocol is reviewed in November 1992. We will be seeking to obtain agreement to limit production to the minimum necessary to meet demand for hydrochlorofluorocarbons in uses where ozone-benign alternatives are not available.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the approximate total production of hydrochlorofluorocarbons in the United Kingdom for each year from 1986 to date; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** Information for 1986 to 1991 is not available. Statistics of United Kingdom production have since been supplied to the Commission of the European Communities in accordance with the terms of EC regulation 594/91, but the information is commercially sensitive and not available for publication.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the latest available yearly export figures for HCFC22; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** The information is not available.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies with which he has had discussions in relation to ozone depletion or ozone-depleting substances; what advice his Department gives to industry on the environmental impact of hydrochlorofluorocarbons; if he will list planned future meetings with user industries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** Officials of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment hold

regular meetings with producers and users of ozone-depleting substances, including hydrochlorofluorocarbons, to exchange information on future requirements, timetables for phasing out production and the availability and take-up of alternatives. My noble colleague Baroness Denton of Wakefield will also be discussing these matters with a producer of ozone-depletiong substances in July.

The Department advises industry that hydrochlorofluorocarbons still have potential to deplete the ozone layer and should therefore be used only in applications where completely ozone-benign alternatives are not available and should be recycled wherever possible.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will give the most recent figures for the amount of *(a)* methyl chloroform, *(b)* chlorofluorocarbons and *(c)* hydrochlorofluorocarbons used in each of the following sectors (i) refrigeration and air conditioning, (ii) solvents, (iii) foams and (iv) medical aerosols; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list by sector and application the essential uses of ozone-destroying chemicals identified by his Department; if he will estimate the tonnage per year that is required by each sector; if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** Information on current usage of ozone-depleting substances is not available in the form requested and the applications for which the use of these substances will remain essential in the longer term have yet to be identified.

However, my Department has commissioned Touche Ross to carry out a study into the current and future pattern of use of ozone-depleting substances in solvent cleaning and the Department of the Environment has commissioned a similar study in relation to the refrigeration and air conditioning sector. The studies will examine current usage, the extent to which replacement has already taken place and how the pattern of use will change by the end of the century, paying special attention to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises. They will identify areas where currently no suitable alternative is available and how much of the probable continuing demand can be met through recycling. The studies will pay particular attention to the period up the end of 1995 as the United Kingdom and its Community partners have agreed to press for all signatories to the Montreal protocol to phase out ozone-depleting substances by then, subject to exemptions for essential uses.

The consultants have been asked to report their findings by the end of September and both reports will be published in due course. The report on an earlier similar study covering halon uses has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the quantity of chlorofluorocarbons exported from the United Kingdom in 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* I confirm the answer that I gave on 11 March 1992 that the information is not published for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

## Prompt Payment

**Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish a survey of the prompt payment record of Government Departments for small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** Surveys of the payment performance of Government Departments to suppliers of goods and services have been undertaken during the last financial year. Officials are finalising the details of the survey results and I expect to publish them in the very near future.

## Pyramid Selling

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will initiate a review of the operation of the Fair Trading Act 1973 to consider whether *(a)* legal recognition may be given to operators of ethical multi-level marketing businesses and *(b)* these businesses should be labelled as something other than a pyramid selling scheme.

**Mr. Leigh:** As regards the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, multi-level marketing schemes which meet the requirements of the pyramid selling regulations may already operate legally, and I see no need for any further provision for legal recognition. As regards the second half, the Fair Trading Act does not label schemes: it outlaws certain practices by promoters and participants of pyramid selling and similar trading schemes, and provides for regulations for others.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Eggar:** The figures for the Department, including its executive agencies and the former Department of Energy, as at 22 June 1992 are:

| *Grade level* | *Number of women* | *Percentage of staff* |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Grade 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Grade 3 | 6 | 10·2 |
| Grade 4 | 2 | 14·3 |
| Grade 5 | 38 | 13·5 |
| Grade 6 | 24 | 10·5 |
| Grade 7 | 160 | 12·9 |
| All staff | 5,806 | 43·9 |

## Overhead Electric Cables

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's current policy on the safety of overhead electric cables.

**Mr. Eggar:** The policy is to ensure the continuing protection of the public from dangers arising from the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity. This includes overhead lines.

To achieve this, regulations made under the Electricity Act 1989 require the works of electricity suppliers to be used, constructed, installed and protected to prevent danger so far as is reasonably practicable. My Department's engineering inspectorate ensures compliance by carrying out regular safety audits and investigations, and examining the event reports submitted by the companies under the regulations.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Eggar:** The figures for the Department, including its executive agencies and the former Department of Energy, as at 25 June 1992 are:

| *Grade levels* | *Number of registered disabled staff* | *Percentage of staff* |
|---|---|---|
| Grades 1-4 | 0 | 0 |
| Grades 5-7 | 4 | 0·2 |
| All staff | 135 | 1·0 |

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with Nuclear Electric concerning *(a)* the 1994 review date set for decisions on further investment in nuclear power, *(b)* the criteria to be used and *(c)* proposals for a 2,600 MW station at Sizewell.

**Mr. Eggar:** I meet the chairman of Nuclear Electric regularly to discuss a range of issues.

The then Secretary of State for Energy made clear to the House on 9 November 1989, *Official Report*, column 1176, that the Government would review the future prospects for nuclear power in 1994. That remains the Government's policy. No capital expenditure approval will be given to Nuclear Electric plc in respect of any new stations beyond Sizewell B pending the outcome of the review. The review will take account of all relevant factors.

### Self-catering Accommodation (Fire Safety)

**Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to issue *(a)* the consultative paper and *(b)* the draft amendment regulations concerning furnishings and fire safety in respect of self-catering accommodation under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* My Department plans to publish, in mid-July, draft amendment regulations and associated consultation documents relating to the fire safety of furnishings in respect of self-catering accommodation under the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act 1987.

### Water Guns

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he intends to strengthen the law to control the sale of high-pressure water guns as toys.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* The Consumer Protection Act 1987 provides the necessary powers to remove from the market any consumer product which is considered unsafe.

### Action Teams

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many action teams his Department has established in Great Britain since 1987; what were their budgets in 1991-92; and what are their proposed budgets for 1992-93;

(2) what was the budget for his Department's action team in Barrow-in-Furness in 1991-92; and what is the proposed budget for the year 1992-93.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* This Department has established one action team since 1987—the Cumbria action team, set up in 1991.

There is no budget as such. The schemes which the action team targets are national or regional in nature and are not costed on geographical basis. The action team is an inter-departmental body, led by DTI. The running costs of the action team fall to the cross-participating departments. The DTI element of running costs for the Cubria based operation—which cover both the Barrow and Cockermouth offices—is estimated at some £65,000 in the current financial year compared to £56,000 for the nine months in which the team was operation in 1991-92.

The Department has also provided support for other initiatives set up by local communities to deal with major closures or redundancies.

### Assisted Areas

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *61-62*, what assessment he has made of whether the coverage of the assisted areas is likely to decrease, following the current review;

(2) what role the European Commission will have in determining the precise extent of the new assisted areas map or the split between development areas and intermediate areas.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Under the state aids provisions of the treaty of Rome the Government will have to clear any new map of the assisted areas, including the designation of development and intermediate areas, with the European Commission.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *61-62*, if he will indicate what views the European Commission have expressed about the current and future extent of the assisted areas map.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The current assisted areas map was cleared by the European Commission in 1984 under the state aid provisions of the treaty of Rome. No proposals on the future shape of the map have yet been put to the Commission.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### EC Presidency

**Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact he has with local authorities, community groups and other organisations in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom prior to the drawing up of the calendar of special events being held in the United Kingdom as part of the programme of the United Kingdom presidency of the EC.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office had regular contact with the Local Government International Bureau which drew attention to the forthcoming presidency and the special events in its

newsletter. This was followed by further contacts with a range of local authorities and community groups to take forward ideas for individual special events.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of producing the pamphlet "The UK Presidency of the European Community".

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** A total of 75,000 copies of the presidency programme booklet are being produced at a total cost of £38,444·60.

**Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about how the United Kingdom venues for the calendar of special events being held as part of the United Kingdom's EC presidency were chosen.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The choice of Edinburgh for the European Council was made by the Prime Minister. The venues for other ministerial meetings were chosen by the Departments concerned. Most of the special events are being organised by non-governmental groups and will take place in various parts of the United Kingdom, including Durham, Bolton, Belfast, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The figures at 1 April 1992 for the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are as follows:

| *Grade*[1] | *Number of women in grade* | *Women as percentage of total in grade* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0·0 | 0·0 |
| 2 | 1·0 | 3·5 |
| 3 | 4·0 | 3·2 |
| 4 | 0·0 | 0·0 |
| 5 | 16·0 | 4·6 |
| 6 | 13·0 | 14·4 |
| 7 | [2]98·5 | 13·5 |

Overall, 2,941 officers, representing 37·1 per cent. of the Department's staff, are women.

[1]Includes home civil service grades and the diplomatic service equivalents.

[2]Part-time staff are counted as half.

## Channel Islands (War Crimes)

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many files relating to war crimes in the Channel islands during world war two are retained in his Department and withheld from the Public Record Office.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** No records relating to war crimes in the Channel islands during world war two are retained in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

## Vietnamese Migrants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of Vietnamese migrants forcibly repatriated to Vietnam who have subsequently returned to Hong Kong.

**Mr. Goodlad:** None of the 161 Vietnamese migrants returned to Vietnam under the orderly repatriation programme has returned to Hong Kong.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what improvements are planned in the conditions under which Vietnamese migrants are held in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Facilities in the camps are kept under constant review and repair or improvement works are carried out where necessary. The Vietnamese migrant population is steadily decreasing and it will soon be possible to close some of the temporary camps altogether.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guarantees he has received from the Government of Vietnam that migrants forcibly repatriated from Hong Kong will not suffer punitive and discriminatory action; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** In the statement of understanding signed by the British, Hong Kong and Vietnamese Governments on 29 October 1991, the Vietnamese undertook that no Vietnamese migrant returning from Hong Kong would be persecuted and that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would have access to them for monitoring purposes. They have reaffirmed this undertaking on several occasions.

More than 20,000 migrants have now returned from the region to Vietnam. There has not been a single substantiated case of persecution.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what screening procedures are applied before any Vietnamese migrants are forcibly repatriated from Hong Kong camps; and what legal advice is made available to them.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Vietnamese asylum-seekers arriving in Hong Kong are interviewed by immigration officers using the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' guidelines for the determination of refugee status. Those who are found not to be refugees may appeal to the refugee status review board. Legal consultants operating under the auspices of UNHCR are on hand to assist applicants.

The screening procedure is supervised by the high commissioner's staff who have unrestricted access to asylum-seekers at each stage.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about the number of lawyers employed in the Hong Kong camps in which Vietnamese migrants are housed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The number of lawyers employed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is a matter for her decision, but such questions are regularly discussed by participants at meetings about the comprehensive plan of action for Indo-Chinese asylum seekers.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights about the resources she has available to monitor the experience of Vietnamese migrants repatriated to Vietnam from Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Returning migrants are monitored by the staff of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, based in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, who undertake frequent visits to returnees' home villages. We regularly review the position with them.

Monitoring visits are also carried out by the staff of the British embassy in Hanoi and by various non-governmental organisations.

## Vietnam (Sanctions)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America about lifting economic sanctions against Vietnam and paying agreed war reparations; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We regularly discuss these issues bilaterally and in the relevant international bodies.

## Government Communication Headquarters

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now make it his policy to answer questions on the number of staff employed at the Government communications headquarters at Cheltenham in departments that do not deal directly with matters of national security.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** In his statement to the House of Commons on 6 May at columns 64-65, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear that the Government would maintain their policy of not commenting on operational information relating to security and intelligence. The information requested by the hon. Member would fall into that category.

## Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office employs no registered disabled staff in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 or 7. One officer at grade 5 is registered disabled—0·3 per cent. of the grade. A total of 0·4 per cent. of the work force of the diplomatic wing and 1·94 per cent. of the work force of the Overseas Development Administration are registered disabled people.

## Brazil

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Brazil about the preservation of tribal reserves of the Guapore valley and the extraction of mahogany from within them.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** None.

## Research Projects

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy with regard to, and extent of, the commissioning of research projects in universities and polytechnics by Government communications headquarters.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg** *[pursuant to his reply, 23 June 1992, c. 108.]:* GCHQ, in common with other Government Departments and private industry, commissions research from universities or polytechnics when they are able to offer a particular area of expertise. Research is confined to unclassified subjects and the results may be published by the university or polytechnic if it wishes for the benefit of the academic community as a whole. Over the last four years seven research contracts totalling £506,953 have been placed by GCHQ with four institutions.

## President Mary Robinson

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to have an invitation issued to President Mary Robinson of Ireland to make an official visit to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Hurd:** There are no plans at present for an official visit.

## China (Political Prisoners)

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the removal of Chinese political prisoners to Hong Kong for use in organ transplant operations.

**Mr. Goodlad:** No Chinese prisoners, political or otherwise, have been sent to Hong Kong. No representations have been received.

## Peru

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Peruvian authorities concerning human rights in Peru; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We take every appropriate opportunity, both bilaterally and with our European partners, to emphasise to the Peruvian authorities their obligation to respect and protect human rights. When President Fujimori called on my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister earlier this year, he was left in no doubt about the strength of feeling in this country. Most recently on 17 June our embassy in Lima reminded the Peruvian Foreign Ministry of the importance we attach to this matter.

## Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Goodlad:** No consultants are presently working on market testing in my Department, although, as I told the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on

16 June, *Official Report*, column *491*. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte carried out separate studies on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration earlier this year in line with the commitments given in the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

## DEFENCE

### Chemical and Biological Weapons

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what British equipment related to chemical and biological warfare has been tested at any military establishment in Australia and New Zealand since 1962; and what was the nature of this work.

**Mr. Aitken:** As explained in the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *254*, the United Kingdom armed forces chemical and biological equipment is wholly for defence.

Environmental testing of prototypes of the S10 respirator was carried out in Austalia in the 1980s.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research his Department's scientists have conducted into the incapacitating agent BZ; and what is the evaluation of BZ as a weapon of war.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** BZ has been identified as a possible incapacitating agent which might be used against United Kingdom armed forces. The chemical and biological defence establishment has carried out studies of anticholinergic compoounds including BZ which confirmed the effectiveness of medical counter-measures against their effects.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Public Record Office the documents relating to the Cabinet Defence Committee in July 1956 to abandon unilaterally all offensive chemical and biological weapons; and for what reason these papers have not yet been placed in the Public Record Office.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The documents in question continue to be properly withheld under the established criteria of the Public Records Acts.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the research establishments conducting human or animal research on nerve gases in Britain.

**Mr. Aitken:** The only research establishment for which my department is responsible conducting research on nerve gases involving animal or human studies is the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down. All research is conducted for defence purposes with the aim of developing effective protective measures for the armed forces against the use of chemical and biological warfare by an aggressor.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many experiments with physostigmine on human volunteers have been carried out at the chemical and biological defence establishment, Porton Down in each year since 1987.

**Mr. Aitken:** This is a matter for the chemical and biological defence establishment (CBDE) under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My Department has the following memoranda of understanding with Switzerland:

i. Security of classified non-atomic defence matters
ii. Exchange of quality assurance services
iii. Firings of the Swiss Rapier weapon system at the Royal Artillery range, Hebrides.

There are no formal arrangements or agreements with Liechtenstein.

For details of international treaties with these two countries, I refer my hon. Friend to the answers that he received from my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on 24 and 25 June, *Official Report*, columns *208-211* and *269* respectively.

### Pensions

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many retired officers of the armed services over the age of 55 years are currently in receipt of pensions for each of the ranks of captain, major, lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier and major general who retired in the year 1 January 1977 to 31 December 1977.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The number of retired Army officers over the age of 55 years, currently in receipt of pension, who retired in the year 1 January 1977 to 31 December 1977 is as follows:

| *Rank* | *Number of officers* |
|---|---|
| Major general | 11 |
| Brigadier | 29 |
| Colonel | 55 |
| Lieutenant colonel | 155 |
| Major | 355 |
| Captain | 117 |

### Detention Centres

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the military detention centres in England.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** They are:

Royal Naval detention quarters—Portsmouth
Military corrective training centre—Colchester
Regional services detention room—RAF Innsworth
Regional services detention room—RAF Wyton

### Public Information

**Mr. Cann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now release the files relating to the Shingle street incident in 1940 into the public domain.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I am not aware of any closed Ministry of Defence records which identify any such incident.

## Low Flying

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to reduce the impact of low-flying military aircraft on livestock and poultry; what consultation he has had with farming organisations and other interested bodies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My Department's policy is to spread low flying as widely as possible throughout the country so as to minimise disturbance. A number of consultations have taken place with farming organisations about low flying.

## Phased Array Radar

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the test phase of the Fylingdales phased array radar is due to be completed; when the PAR is due to become fully operational; and what role it will play in the nation's defence.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The phased array radar at RAF Fylingdales will reach initial operational capability on 1 July this year and will be fully operational on 1 October. The role of the station will continue to be that of a ballistic missile early warning system.

## Fuel Jettisoning

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cases of Phantom jets jettisoning more than 1,000 litres of fuel while airborne have been reported in each year since 1980.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The number of reported incidents of RAF Phantom jets jettisoning fuel while airborne is as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 12 |
| 1981 | 30 |
| 1982 | 46 |
| 1983 | 52 |
| 1984 | 35 |
| 1985 | 14 |
| 1986 | 5 |
| 1987 | 16 |
| 1988 | 22 |
| 1989 | 15 |
| 1990 | 11 |
| 1991 | 4 |

No records are kept of the amount of fuel jettisoned.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is given to Royal Air Force and Royal Navy pilots about jettisoning large quantities of fuel while airborne over *(a)* the sea, *(b)* rural areas and *(c)* built-up areas.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** It is normal practice for aircrew to jettison fuel only if, in an emergency, it is essential to reduce the aircraft weight before landing and the option of remaining airborne in order to burn fuel is not possible.

In the United Kingdom, RAF and RN pilots are directed that, where possible, fuel is not to be jettisoned at a height lower than 1,500 ft. The aircraft must also be under air traffic control and, where possible, over the sea. Otherwise a sparsely populated area should be chosen.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the environmental consequences of aviation fuel being jettisoned by airborne military aircraft.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** RN and RAF pilots are instructed to jettison fuel under carefully controlled conditions which ensure that the great majority of fuel evaporates before it reaches the ground. There is, therefore, minimal environmental impact at ground or sea level.

The evaporated fuel is widely dispersed. Most of it is biodegradable and that which remains has no known effects on the atmosphere. There are no products in military aviation jet fuel known to cause greenhouse effects, damage to the ozone layer or air pollution in the lower atmosphere.

## Extremely Low Frequency Communications

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many installations for extremely low frequency communications are in operational use in the United Kingdom; whether they are effective; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

## Nuclear Missiles

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how targets for nuclear missiles are determined; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** It has been the practice of successive Governments not to discuss our nuclear targeting plans.

## Trident

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make it his policy to provide information on the proportion of Trident nuclear warheads to be constructed in the United States of America.

**Mr. Aitken:** All Trident warheads will be constructed in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of successful tests of the Trident missiles and the total number of tests conducted.

**Mr. Aitken:** The United States Navy has to date conducted a total of 35 test firings of the Trident II D5 ballistic missile, of which 30 were successful—one partially—one was destroyed in error by the test range authorities, and four were unsuccessful. All test flights since December 1989 have been successful, and have validated fully the reliability of the Trident II system.

## Nuclear Tests

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how records were compiled for persons serving in the British nuclear tests, who were not issued with film badges, and what the present day monitoring procedures are.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Records of test participants were complied by the National Radiological Protection Board

from personnel records, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment reports, planning documents, Her Majesty's ships' ledgers, RAF operations record books and the "blue books". As the United Kingdom no longer conducts atmospheric nuclear weapons testing, no present day monitoring procedures for this situation exist. Otherwise, monitoring procedures implement MOD policy which is to justify all exposures, comply with MOD and statutory limits and to keep all exposures as low as reasonably practicable.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what records he has of contamination levels in copra, drinking water and sea water, recorded during British nuclear testing in the south Atlantic during the 1950s and 1960s; if he will make them available to the NRPB—National Radiological Protection Board—study; and if he will place the information in the Library.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Ministry of Defence records show no significant radioactive material from the tests in the south Pacific ocean was detected in drinking water, copra or sea water in any of the samples collected from areas that were occupied by participants. The monitoring records from Christmas Island are currently being compiled into a report for the National Radiological Protection Board study, and this report will be placed in the Library of the House when it is ready.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British nuclear test participants have died as a result of multiple myeloma and non-lymphatic leukaemia.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Mortality figures for multiple myeloma and non-lymphatic leukaemia among test participants will be provided in the National Radiological Protection Board report, which will be published, subject to peer review, later this year.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the purpose of the "blue book" at the time information was, initially, collated for entry; and if he has made this information available to the NRPB study.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The "blue books" are a compilation of information by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment whose purpose was to provide timely advice to test participants on their radiation exposure, if any, from the tests. The "blue books" have been made available to the National Radiological Protection Board.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the exclusion zone declared between 1 March and 1 August 1957 and the action that was taken to safeguard personnel within that zone; and if he has made this information available to the NRPB study.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The purpose of the exclusion zone was to prevent aircraft and ships from straying into a possible danger area. Personnel within the zone were at a safe distance from the detonations. The original archive documents relating to the exclusion zone can be made available for the National Radiological Protection Board's inspection should it so wish.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many deaths per million have occurred annually, since 1962, resulting from multiple myeloma and non-lymphatic leukaemia in *(a)* the population of the United Kingdom and *(b)* British nuclear test participants.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I will write to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on differences between British and American nuclear test programmes in connection with safety procedures and protective measures; and if he has made this information available to the NRPB study.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The United States nuclear weapon test programme was wholly different from that of the United Kingdom. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on United States safety procedures and protective measures which are entirely a matter for the United States.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has concerning persons who were provided with protective clothing at the time of the Grapple Y test who were further away from the test site than other, unprotected, test participants; and if he has made this information available to the NRPB study.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** All participants in the Grapple Y test were issued, where necessary, with suitable protective clothing to protect against the heat generated by the detonation.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what tests are being undertaken to identify levels of Americium contamination in British nuclear test participants and to establish whether this differs from the control group of non-nuclear test veterans.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will compensate Mr. Andrew Dickson for exposure to radiation during nuclear tests in the Pacific.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** There is no evidence that Mr. Dickson was exposed to radiation whilst serving on Christmas Island. Compensation would be considered if a participant in the United Kingdom test programme could show—even on the balance of probabilities—that participation had caused any subsequent illness.

## Support Services

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will quantify the savings in co-locating the support management groups and logistic support services; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The recurring savings which would accrue from the collaboration of all the support management group and logistic support services are estimated to be in the order of £6 million per annum.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the valuations placed on buildings which would be available for disposal under option II of his consultation document "The Wyton Option".

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No. Provision of the valuations would disclose information which is commercially sensitive.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the costs for new buildings necessitated by the proposed move of the support management group to RAF Wyton; and what are the costs of refurbishing existing buildings for the same purpose at RAF Wyton.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** This information is commercial in confidence.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the numbers of posts for RAF service men and civilian employees provided for in his proposal to co-locate the support management group and the associated units of logistic support services.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The number of service and civilian posts proposed at RAF Wyton is estimated to be about 3,000.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost in redundancy payments arising from his review of the support management groups and logistic support services and reduction in staff levels.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** It is not possible to be precise about anticipated redundancy costs at this stage. The same basis for assessing potential redundancy costs was, however, used for every option which involved non-mobile staff. Every effort will be made to minimise redundancy.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make available a copy of the RAF's relocation implementation working group study report.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No. This is an internal document which contains information confidential to management. Summary details of the report have, however, been made public in a consultative document.

### Ministry Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence police officers are based in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** For security reasons, it is not our practice to disclose such details.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Aitken:** Mr. Christopher Littmoden, finance director of Marks and Spencer, has been appointed as a part-time adviser on the Department's market-testing programme.

### Nuclear Contamination, Australia

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current position regarding discussions between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Australia regarding the clean-up of nuclear contamination on the Maralinga lands in South Australia and compensation to the Aboriginal people affected; and when he expects to announce Her Majesty's Government's intentions.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Australian Government have asked that the United Kingdom make a contribution towards the cost of further rehabilitation of the former nuclear weapon test sites at Maralinga and Emu Field in South Australia, and meet the cost of providing compensation for the local Aboriginal population. Our view is that the agreement reached in 1968 with the then Australian Government releases the United Kingdom from any further responsibility for rehabilitation of these sites and that the question of compensation for the Aboriginal population is not one for Her Majesty's Government. Nevertheless, we are carefully studying the Australian request, which raises a number of complex legal and technical issues, and hope to give a considered response soon.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Training

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from her Department for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(2) if she will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from her Department for the provision of youth training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(3) if she will list for each training and enterprise council the budget made available from her Department for the provision of employment training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(4) if she will list for each training and enterprise council the number of training weeks contracted for under employment training *(a)* in 1991-92, *(b)* in 1992-93 and *(c)* the percentage difference;

(5) if she will list for each training and enterprise council the number of training weeks contracted for under youth training *(a)* in 1991-92, *(b)* in 1992-93 and *(c)* the percentage difference.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested for 1991-92 is given in the following tables for England only. Information relating to Wales and Scotland is a matter for the respective Secretaries of State to answer. I am not at present in a position to give the coresponding information for 1992-93.

*TEC budget allocations 1991-92 and at 1992-93 prices*
*London*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| AZTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 10·7 | 2·4 | 3·4 | 3·6 | 6·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·2 | 2·5 | 3·6 | — | — |
| CENTEC (16 September 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 12·0 | 3·2 | 3·2 | 6·4 | 7·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·5 | 3·3 | 3·3 | — | — |
| CILNTEC (14 October 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 8·1 | 2·2 | 3·1 | 4·6 | 6·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 8·5 | 2·3 | 3·2 | — | — |
| LETEC | | | | | |
| Current | 27·6 | 9·0 | 10·5 | 17·4 | 27·0 |
| 1992-93 prices | 28·8 | 9·4 | 11·0 | — | — |
| North London (16 September 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 9·7 | 3·2 | 2·4 | 6·1 | 5·7 |
| 1992-93 prices | 10·1 | 3·3 | 2·5 | — | — |
| North West London (16 September 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 5·6 | 1·8 | 1·5 | 3·3 | 3·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 5·9 | 1·9 | 1·6 | — | — |
| SOLOTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 18·6 | 3·8 | 4·7 | 6·7 | 12·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 19·4 | 4·0 | 4·9 | — | — |
| South Thames (27 May 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 20·5 | 7·0 | 5·3 | 12·9 | 10·1 |
| 1992-93 prices | 21·4 | 7·3 | 5·5 | — | — |
| West London (16 September 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 8·9 | 2·0 | 3·4 | 3·3 | 8·0 |
| 1992-93 prices | 9·3 | 2·1 | 3·6 | — | — |

*Notes:*
1. The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.
2. Where TECs became operational after 1 April 1991, the dates are shown in brackets.

*TEC budget allocations 1991-92 and at 1992-93 prices*
*South East*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Essex | | | | | |
| Current | 29·2 | 5·8 | 12·3 | 9·1 | 22·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 31·0 | 6·1 | 12·9 | — | — |
| Hampshire | | | | | |
| Current | 32·0 | 5·0 | 16·8 | 9·4 | 36·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 33·4 | 5·2 | 17·6 | — | — |
| Heart of England | | | | | |
| Current | 10·7 | 1·6 | 4·9 | 2·6 | 9·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·2 | 1·7 | 5·1 | — | — |
| Hertfordshire | | | | | |
| Current | 19·5 | 2·8 | 5·4 | 5·2 | 9·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 20·4 | 2·9 | 5·6 | — | — |
| Isle of Wight | | | | | |
| Current | 4·1 | 0·6 | 1·6 | 1·0 | 3·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 4·3 | 0·6 | 1·7 | — | — |
| Kent | | | | | |
| Current | 32·2 | 5·5 | 14·3 | 8·9 | 28·7 |
| 1992-93 prices | 33·6 | 5·7 | 14·9 | — | — |
| Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire | | | | | |
| Current | 6·5 | 1·2 | 3·5 | 1·9 | 5·8 |
| 1992-93 | 6·8 | 1·3 | 3·7 | — | — |
| Surrey | | | | | |
| Current | 14·1 | 1·8 | 4·5 | 3·2 | 11·7 |
| 1992-93 prices | 14·7 | 1·9 | 4·7 | — | — |
| Sussex | | | | | |
| Current | 26·0 | 4·5 | 11·2 | 8·3 | 23·1 |
| 1992-93 | 27·2 | 4·7 | 11·7 | — | — |
| Thames Valley Enterprise | | | | | |
| Current | 24·9 | 2·4 | 13·6 | 4·1 | 30·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 26·0 | 2·5 | 14·2 | — | — |

*Note:*
The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

*TEC budget allocations 1991-92 and at 1992-93 prices*

*South West*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Avon | | | | | |
| Current | 29·3 | 6·0 | 13·0 | 11·4 | 27·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 30·6 | 6·3 | 13·6 | — | — |
| Devon and Cornwall | | | | | |
| Current | 52·5 | 10·5 | 22·1 | 19·9 | 27·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 52·9 | 11·0 | 23·1 | — | — |
| Dorset | | | | | |
| Current | 15·5 | 2·5 | 7·1 | 4·0 | 14·7 |
| 1992-93 prices | 16·2 | 2·6 | 7·4 | — | — |
| Gloucester | | | | | |
| Current | 13·0 | 1·9 | 6·4 | 3·5 | 13·4 |
| 192-93 prices | 13·6 | 2·0 | 6·7 | — | — |
| Somerset | | | | | |
| Current | 13·3 | 1·7 | 6·4 | 3·1 | 13·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 13·9 | 1·8 | 6·7 | — | — |
| Wiltshire | | | | | |
| Current | 12·8 | 1·7 | 6·3 | 3·0 | 13·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 13·4 | 1·8 | 6·6 | — | — |

*Note:*

The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

*West Midlands*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Birmingham | | | | | |
| Current | 46·5 | 16·6 | 15·1 | 22·9 | 25·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 48·6 | 17·3 | 15·8 | — | — |
| Central England | | | | | |
| Current | 11·0 | 2·2 | 4·8 | 5·1 | 10·0 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·5 | 2·3 | 5·0 | — | — |
| Coventry | | | | | |
| Current | 25·8 | 4·9 | 12·9 | 9·7 | 24·7 |
| 1992-93 prices | 27·0 | 5·1 | 13·5 | — | — |
| Dudley | | | | | |
| Current | 11·2 | 2·9 | 5·1 | 5·7 | 11·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·7 | 3·0 | 5·3 | — | — |
| Hereford and Worcester | | | | | |
| Current | 10·1 | 2·0 | 4·7 | 3·7 | 9·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 10·6 | 2·1 | 4·9 | — | — |
| Sandwell | | | | | |
| Current | 11·4 | 2·8 | 5·2 | 5·7 | 10·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·9 | 2·9 | 5·4 | — | — |
| Shropshire | | | | | |
| Current | 13·5 | 2·9 | 6·6 | 5·8 | 14·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 14·1 | 3·0 | 6·9 | — | — |
| Staffordshire | | | | | |
| Current | 34·6 | 6·0 | 19·6 | 11·6 | 39·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 36·2 | 6·3 | 20·5 | — | — |
| Walsall | | | | | |
| Current | 10·5 | 3·2 | 4·5 | 6·0 | 8·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·0 | 3·3 | 4·7 | — | — |
| Wolverhampton | | | | | |
| Current | 11·6 | 3·1 | 5·0 | 6·5 | 10·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·1 | 3·2 | 5·2 | — | — |

*Note:*

1. The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

*Midlands and Eastern*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Leicester | | | | | |
| Current | 26·3 | 4·7 | 14·2 | 7·3 | 30·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 27·5 | 4·9 | 14·8 | — | — |
| Northamptonshire | | | | | |
| Current | 12·9 | 2·5 | 6·2 | 3·8 | 13·1 |
| 1992-93 prices | 13·5 | 2·6 | 6·5 | — | — |

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Lincolnshire | | | | | |
| Current | 18·8 | 3·7 | 11·1 | 6·0 | 21·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 19·6 | 3·9 | 11·6 | — | — |
| Greater Nottingham | | | | | |
| Current | 21·4 | 4·7 | 11·2 | 8·4 | 22·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 22·4 | 4·9 | 1·7 | — | — |
| North Nottingham | | | | | |
| Current | 17·0 | 5·0 | 8·2 | 5·0 | 15·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 17·8 | 5·2 | 8·6 | — | — |
| South Derbyshire | | | | | |
| Current | 17·6 | 4·1 | 9·2 | 6·4 | 18·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 18·4 | 4·3 | 9·6 | — | — |
| North Derbyshire | | | | | |
| Current | 11·5 | 2·2 | 6·2 | 4·3 | 12·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·0 | 2·3 | 6·5 | — | — |
| Norfolk and Waveney | | | | | |
| Current | 22·9 | 4·7 | 12·4 | 8·7 | 24·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 23·9 | 4·9 | 13·0 | — | — |
| Suffolk | | | | | |
| Current | 14·2 | 1·8 | 4·5 | 3·2 | 8·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 14·8 | 1·9 | 4·7 | — | — |
| Bedfordshire | | | | | |
| Current | 12·1 | 1·7 | 7·0 | 2·7 | 14·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·6 | 1·8 | 7·3 | — | — |
| Greater Peterborough | | | | | |
| Current | 8·2 | 1·6 | 4·3 | 3·0 | 10·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 8·6 | 1·7 | 4·5 | — | — |
| CAMBSTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 6·4 | 0·7 | 3·2 | 1·2 | 7·1 |
| 1992-93 prices | 6·7 | 0·7 | 3·3 | — | — |

*Note:* 1. The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

*Yorkshire and Humberside*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Leeds | | | | | |
| Current | 22·5 | 5·5 | 10·6 | 12·1 | 17·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 23·5 | 5·7 | 11·1 | — | — |
| North Yorkshire | | | | | |
| Current | 17·0 | 3·5 | 5·1 | 7·1 | 13·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 17·8 | 3·7 | 5·3 | — | — |
| Bradford | | | | | |
| Current | 18·7 | 4·7 | 6·9 | 8·4 | 10·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 19·5 | 4·9 | 7·2 | — | — |
| Calderdale/Kirklees | | | | | |
| Current | 20·6 | 5·5 | 9·8 | 9·3 | 18·0 |
| 1992-93 prices | 21·5 | 5·7 | 10·2 | — | — |
| Wakefield | | | | | |
| Current | 12·2 | 3·2 | 6·0 | 5·6 | 9·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·7 | 3·3 | 6·3 | — | — |
| Barnsley and Doncaster | | | | | |
| Current | 25·7 | 7·5 | 14·1 | 13·0 | 23·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 26·9 | 7·8 | 14·7 | — | — |
| Sheffield | | | | | |
| Current | 24·2 | 6·8 | 12·6 | 11·4 | 18·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 25·3 | 7·1 | 13·2 | — | — |
| Rotherham | | | | | |
| Current | 12·1 | 3·3 | 6·0 | 5·8 | 9·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·6 | 3·4 | 6·3 | — | — |
| Humberside | | | | | |
| Current | 37·5 | 10·6 | 18·5 | 18·3 | 37·0 |
| 1992-93 prices | 39·2 | 11·1 | 19·3 | — | — |

*Note:* The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

*North west*

| TEC | £ million budgets | | | Training weeks × 10,000 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Employment training | Youth training | Employment training | Youth training |
| Bolton and Bury | | | | | |
| Current | 12·9 | 2·5 | 6·6 | 4·3 | 13·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 13·5 | 2·6 | 6·9 | — | — |

| TEC | £ million budgets Total | Employment training | Youth training | Training weeks × 10,000 Employment training | Youth training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CEWTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 21·0 | 7·4 | 10·4 | 13·7 | 18·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 21·9 | 7·7 | 10·9 | — | — |
| Cumbria | | | | | |
| Current | 17·3 | 3·4 | 10·3 | 6·8 | 21·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 18·1 | 3·6 | 10·8 | — | — |
| ELTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 17·3 | 3·5 | 8·6 | 6·4 | 17·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 18·1 | 3·7 | 9·0 | — | — |
| LAWTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 26·3 | 6·1 | 12·9 | 10·8 | 26·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 27·5 | 6·4 | 13·5 | — | — |
| Manchester | | | | | |
| Current | 38·5 | 9·9 | 16·9 | 15·9 | 35·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 40·2 | 10·3 | 17·7 | — | — |
| METROTEC | | | | | |
| Current | 10·5 | 2·4 | 5·1 | 4·3 | 10·1 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·0 | 2·5 | 5·3 | — | — |
| Oldham | | | | | |
| Current | 8·6 | 1·6 | 4·7 | 2·9 | 9·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 9·0 | 1·7 | 4·9 | — | — |
| QUALITEC | | | | | |
| Current | 9·3 | 2·3 | 5·5 | 3·9 | 9·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 9·7 | 2·4 | 5·7 | — | — |
| Rochdale | | | | | |
| Current | 6·5 | 2·1 | 2·9 | 4·1 | 6·1 |
| 1992-93 prices | 6·8 | 2·2 | 3·0 | — | — |
| South and East Cheshire | | | | | |
| Current | 10·9 | 1·8 | 4·2 | 2·5 | 7·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 11·4 | 1·9 | 4·4 | — | — |
| Stockport and High Peak | | | | | |
| Current | 9·7 | 1·7 | 4·9 | 3·1 | 10·3 |
| 1992-93 prices | 10·1 | 1·8 | 5·1 | — | — |
| Merseyside (24 June 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 41·6 | 12·6 | 20·8 | 22·9 | 36·5 |
| 1992-93 prices | 43·5 | 13·2 | 21·7 | — | — |
| NORMID (24 June 1991) | | | | | |
| Current | 11·9 | 2·3 | 7·1 | 4·2 | 13·6 |
| 1992-93 prices | 12·4 | 2·4 | 7·4 | — | — |

*Notes:*
1. The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.
2. Where TECs become operational after 1 April 1991, the dates are shown in brackets.

*Northern*

| TEC | £ million budgets Total | Employment training | Youth training | Training weeks × 10,000 Employment training | Youth training |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teeside | | | | | |
| Current | 34·6 | 11·8 | 14·8 | 18·3 | 16·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 36·2 | 12·3 | 15·5 | — | — |
| Tyneside | | | | | |
| Current | 45·9 | 13·5 | 20·1 | 21·0 | 25·9 |
| 1992-93 prices | 48·0 | 14·1 | 21·0 | — | — |
| Wearside | | | | | |
| Current | 21·5 | 6·6 | 9·4 | 10·8 | 35·8 |
| 1992-93 prices | 22·5 | 6·9 | 9·8 | — | — |
| County Durham | | | | | |
| Current | 34·4 | 10·6 | 15·7 | 17·5 | 29·4 |
| 1992-93 prices | 35·9 | 11·1 | 16·4 | — | — |
| Northumberland | | | | | |
| Current | 15·6 | 3·5 | 5·1 | 5·6 | 8·2 |
| 1992-93 prices | 16·3 | 3·7 | 5·3 | — | — |

*Note:*
The percentage difference between current and 1992-93 prices is 4·5 per cent.

## Ankylosing Spondylitis

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what study her Department has done into the effects of ankylosing spondylitis on the body of sufferers to both work and availability for work as far as unemployment benefits are concerned; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Department has not carried out a study into the effects of ankylosing spondylitis or any other specific illness.

The Employment Service can offer specialist advice to any unemployed person with a disability or long-term health problem who needs guidance in obtaining work. In providing advice, the Employment Service's general

approach is to treat each person as an individual and not to be unnecessarily restrictive. We believe that people with disabilities should be considered fit for work across the full range of occupations unless there are very clear reasons otherwise. If the needs of the individual make it necessary, the ES can provide practical help and has access to other specialists who can assist with particular problems which might arise from specific disabilities.

Physical or mental disability may force some unemployed people to impose restrictions on the work they can accept. If these restrictions are reasonable in the circumstances, and provided the person is available to do some work on each day that benefit is paid, the rules state that benefit is allowed.

### New Jobs

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates her Department makes of the numbers of people in work in Suffolk and Norfolk in jobs which had not been created 10 years ago; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** No records are kept of jobs created; only estimates of the net changes in the numbers of employees in employment are made. The earliest and most recent figures for employees in employment by county are from the censuses of employment for September 1981 and September 1989. Between the two census dates the numbers of employees increased by 41,400 in Suffolk and by 30,500 in Norfolk.

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will indicate for each training and enterprise council—TEC—area the number of people unemployed in *(a)* April 1991 and *(b)* April 1992, indicating the percentage difference;

(2) if she will indicate for each TEC area the number of people classified as long-term unemployed in April 1991 and April 1992 *(a)* as a total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total number unemployed, indicating the percentage difference in both cases;

(3) if she will indicate for each TEC area the number of young people unemployed in April 1991 and April 1992 *(a)* as a total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total number unemployed, indicating the percentage difference in both cases.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

### Careers Service

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to change the legal basis of the careers service.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Legislation to open up a range of options for management of careers services is to be included in the Employment Bill announced in the Queen's Speech on 6 May 1992. The legislation will implement changes proposed in chapter 7 of volume 1 of the Government's White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st Century", Cm 1536, published in May 1991.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who has been appointed as a consultant to her Department for market testing.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Department has not appointed any one individual or company as a consultant for market testing. However, several companies have provided consultancy advice on market testing. They are Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, Ernst and Young, KPMG, Symmonds and PA Consultants.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) pursuant to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report*, column *591*, about hearing appeals on disability living allowances, what is the maximum time he regards as acceptable to hear an appeal;

(2) how many people have been waiting to have their appeals on disability living allowance heard for *(a)* less than one month, *(b)* between one and three months, *(c)* between three and six months and *(d)* over six months.

**Mr. Scott:** Clearance times for appeals is a matter for the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, under its framework document, and the president of the Independent Tribunal Service.

Provisional target clearance times set by the Benefits Agency allow for 80 per cent. of appeals against a disability living allowance to be cleared within 30 working days, and 95 per cent. within 45 working days. This time relates to the preparation of the appeal and its submission to the Independent Tribunal Service. Information about clerance times within the Independent Tribunal Service may be obtained from the office of the president, His Honour Judge Holden.

No appeals against disability living allowance decisions have been received by the Independent Tribunal Service.

### Pension Law

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is now in a position to announce the members of the Pension Law Review Committee.

**Mr. Lilley:** On 8 June, *Official Report*, columns, 19-21, I announced the establishment of a committee to review the framework of law and regulation within which occupational pension schemes operate, which is to be chaired by Professor Roy Goode QC.

I am very pleased that the individuals listed have agreed to serve as members of the Pension Law Review Committee. Between them they possess an enormous range and depth of knowledge about occupational pensions and the wider social and economic context, and each of them will help to ensure that the committee's final report is complete and authoritative.

The members are:

Tony Atkinson—Professor of Economics, London School of Economics

David Berridge—Chief Executive, Scottish Equitable Life Assurance

Harvie Brown—Actuary and Principal, William M. Mercer Fraser Ltd.

Bryan Hines—formerly General Manager, Insurance and Investments, ICI plc
Stewart James—Partner, Rowe and Maw
Terence Libby—Chairman and Chief Executive, Morrisflex Ltd.
Alastair Ross-Goobey—Chief Investment Strategist, James Capel
Patricia Triggs—Partner, KPMG Peat Marwick McLintock
Sue Ward—Freelance journalist and researcher on pensions issues.

I understand from Professor Goode that the committee will invite evidence to be submitted on the basis of a consultation paper which it will produce as soon as possible. I will ask Professor Goode to ensure that the availability of the consultation paper is made widely known when it is published.

### Mortgage Protection Insurance

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the proceeds of mortgage protection insurance are counted as general income, or as a specific offset to any entitlement for mortgage interest support in the calculation of income support; and what are the relevant regulations or orders or guidance to adjudication officers.

**Mr. Burt:** Income from a mortgage protection insurance policy intended and used to meet payments on a loan that is eligible for help from income support is counted as general income, but the following amounts are ignored:

the amount of the capital repayments, or the endowment premiums on an endowment mortgage;
the amount of interest not being met in income support because of the 50 per cent. restriction during the first 16 weeks of the claim;
the amount of the premiums due on the policy.

The relevant regulation is paragraph 29 of schedule 9 to the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987—SI 1987-1967. Guidance on this for adjudication officers is at paragraphs 29663-29666 of the Adjudication Officers' Guide. The Benefits Agency issued additional guidance on the assessment of cases involving mortgage protection policies in a bulletin to all income support staff on 9 June 1992.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide for each metropolitan, borough and district council in England and Wales, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* the number of tenancies held by each local authority, *(b)* the numbers of housing benefit claimants, split into rent rebate and rent allowance categories and the total amount paid under each heading, *(c)* the percentage rise in expenditure by each local authority's total housing benefit over the year before, *(d)* the numbers and amounts of housing benefit backdated payments and the amount as a percentage of each authority's housing benefit expenditure, *(e)* the numbers, amounts and percentage relative to total housing benefit expenditure of discretionary payments and *(f)* a breakdown of the categories of housing benefit overpayments, with the numbers and amounts and as a percentage of housing benefit expenditure.

**Mr. Burt:** The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time for processing claims for disability living allowance.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Ankylosing Spondylitis

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what study his Department has done into the effects of ankylosing spondylitis on the body with a view to amending its importance in considering social security benefits; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** No such study has been carried out by the Department. In general, social security benefits for disabled people are awarded on the basis of the level and effects of illness or disability, rather than on the basis of the medical condition.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans the Government have to make invalidity benefit wholly or partially subject to a means test or to replace any part of it with means-tested provision in the foreseeable future.

**Mr. Scott:** We have no such plans.

### Maxwell Pension Funds

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column *140*, if he will publish the information he has available on the number of people, other than those in the Maxwell pension schemes, whose pensions are threatened because of these schemes not being able to meet the pension payments and future commitments.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer the hon. Member to my answers to him on 12 June at column *315* and on 23 June at column *140*. I have nothing further to add to the previous answers.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Price Waterhouse was contracted by this Department to advise on potential areas for market testing. No further market-testing consultancy appointments have been made.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those local offices whose allocation of social fund moneys has now been reduced following the discovery of a computer error; and if he will detail the amount of the reduction for each office.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is in the table. The table also shows the level of extra allocation districts were allowed to retain over and above allocations due to them under the national formula in order to minimise any disruption that might otherwise have occurred.

| *District* | *Reduction* £ | *Retained* £ |
|---|---|---|
| Bankside | 51,860 | 27,287 |
| Bradford (Grants) | 84,083 | 38,028 |
| City East | 44,564 | 24,855 |
| Euston (Grants) | 47,358 | 25,786 |
| Euston | 26,629 | 18,876 |
| Liverpool, North (Grants) | 46,247 | 25,416 |
| Liverpool, North | 54,440 | 28,147 |
| Liverpool, South (Grants) | 77,811 | 35,937 |
| Newham (Grants) | 23,303 | 17,768 |
| Newham | 36,946 | 22,315 |
| Lothian, West | 75,659 | 35,220 |
| Neasdon (Grants) | 95,735 | 41,912 |
| Neasdon | 118,178 | 49,393 |
| Oldham (Grants) | 7,145 | 12,382 |
| Staffordshire, North (Grants) | 40,735 | 23,578 |
| Swansea (Grants) | 10,945 | 13,648 |
| Worcestershire, North | 69,712 | 33,237 |

Amounts refer to the loans budget unless otherwise indicated.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will introduce further regulations to amend the law concerning occupational and personal pension schemes.

**Mr. Lilley:** I have today laid before Parliament regulations which make a number of amendments in the field of occupational and personal pension schemes.

The regulations tighten existing regulations relating to the disclosure of information by trustees and administrators of occupational and personal pension schemes. The new regulations lay down time limits within which information must be disclosed to members, prospective members, beneficiaries and trade unions. They require schemes to disclose additional information following the introduction of provisions to the Social Security Act 1990, in particular, schemes must disclose:

the functions and address of the Pensions Ombudsman;
the role and address of the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service Ltd.;
whether an independent trustee has been appointed by an insolvency practitioner in relation to the sponsoring employer, who he is, and, if not, why not;
whether the scheme has registered with the registrar of occupational and personal pension schemes;
whether trustees have access to guidance published by the Occupational Pensions Board on "Pension Trust Principles".

The regulations make a number of technical amendments to definitions in the Disclosure of Information Regulations and to the form of the actuary's statement.

The regulations also extend the circumstances in which small amounts of pension may be commuted to a lump sum and make a number of technical amendments to the Preservation Regulations, the Levy Regulations and the Register of Occupational and Personal Pension Schemes Regulations.

The amendments in relation to commutation and to the Levy and Register Regulations will come into force on 20 July 1992; the remainder of the regulations will come into effect on 28 September 1992.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to respond to the report of the Social Security Select Committee on the operation of pension funds.

**Mr. Lilley:** The Government's response to the Select Committee's report is published today. We have accepted the main recommendation of the Committee:

"the Government should establish an inquiry operating within a strict timetable to collect evidence from the public on what the detailed structure of a new Pensions Act should be".

As I announced to the House on 8 June, I have set up a committee to examine the administration and regulation of pension schemes under the chairmanship of Professor Goode of Oxford university. Most of the Select Committee's recommendations fall within the terms of reference of the Goode committee. The Government's response to the Select Committee therefore deals specifically with those areas not covered by the review.

## Social Fund

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications for discretionary social fund awards were refused on the grounds that the applicant had insufficient funds to repay the loan; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* region and *(b)* local DSS office.

**Mr. Scott** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* The most recent available figures, based on information for April 1992 from Benefits Agency districts, is in the table.

*Number of refusals classified as inability to repay*

| *District name* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Bankside | 47 |
| Barking and Havering | 15 |
| Barnet | 16 |
| Barnsley DMU | 16 |
| Bedfordshire | 13 |
| Berkshire | 20 |
| Birmingham Chamberlain | 29 |
| Birmingham Heartlands | 23 |
| Birmingham North West | 31 |
| Birmingham South East | 7 |
| Birmingham South West | 32 |
| Blackburn and Accrington | 34 |
| Blackpool | 13 |
| Bolton | 14 |
| Bradford | 60 |
| Bristol Severnside | 32 |
| Brunel | 23 |
| Buckinghamshire | 21 |
| Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 30 |
| Canterbury and Thanet | 9 |
| Central Derbyshire | 19 |
| Central Staffordshire | 11 |
| Channel | 4 |
| Cheshire North West and Central | 13 |
| Cheshire East | 8 |
| Chesterfield and Worksop | 11 |
| City East | 12 |
| Clyde Coast and Cowal | 20 |
| Clyde Valley | 46 |
| Coatbridge | 88 |
| Cornwall | 78 |
| Coventry | 28 |
| Cumbria North | 16 |
| Cynon Merthyr Rhymney Valley | 19 |
| Derbyshire South | 13 |
| Devonia | 9 |
| Doncaster DMU | 12 |
| Dorset | 28 |
| Durham North | 13 |

| District name | Number |
|---|---|
| Durham South | 46 |
| Ealing | 21 |
| East Lowlands | 22 |
| East Nottinghamshire | 14 |
| East Sussex | 8 |
| Essex South East | 25 |
| Essex South West | 21 |
| Euston | 25 |
| Fife | 32 |
| Forth Valley | 22 |
| Fulham | 32 |
| Glamorgan South | 18 |
| Glasgow South West | 102 |
| Glasgow Anniesland | 35 |
| Glasgow City | 16 |
| Glasgow East | 116 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 78 |
| Gloucester | 18 |
| Grampian and Shetland | 14 |
| Gwent North and Brecon | 15 |
| Gwyneddigion | 5 |
| Hackney and Islington | 33 |
| Halifax | 25 |
| Hampshire North | 23 |
| Harrow and Hillingdon | 12 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 26 |
| Highlands and Islands | 13 |
| Hounslow and Kingston | 6 |
| Hull | 34 |
| Irvine | 15 |
| Kent North | 12 |
| Kirklees MDU | 15 |
| Knowsley | 21 |
| Lancaster | 9 |
| Lea Roding | 10 |
| Leaside | 27 |
| Leeds North | 22 |
| Leeds South | 19 |
| Leicestershire North | 19 |
| Lewisham and Brixton | 65 |
| Lincolnshire | 2 |
| Liverpool Central | 17 |
| Liverpool North | 32 |
| Liverpool South | 19 |
| Lomond and Argyll | 17 |
| London Central | 3 |
| Lothian Central | 33 |
| Lothian West | 36 |
| Manchester Central | 25 |
| Manchester North | 12 |
| Mid Wales and Maelor | 31 |
| Neasden | 30 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 25 |
| Newham | 27 |
| North and East Hertfordshire | 12 |
| North Essex | 14 |
| North Staffordshire | 25 |
| North Tyneside | 20 |
| North Wales Coast | 8 |
| North Yorkshire | 18 |
| Northamptonshire | 9 |
| Northumberland | 7 |
| Norwich | 25 |
| Nottinghamshire North | 3 |
| Nottinghamshire West | 12 |
| Ogwr Afan Nedd | 9 |
| Oldham | 14 |
| Oxfordshire | 19 |
| Preston | 19 |
| Renfrew | 28 |
| Rother and Dearne | 14 |
| South East Hampshire and Isle of Wight | 17 |
| Salford | 13 |
| Sandwell | 12 |
| Sefton | 23 |
| Sheffield East | 11 |
| Sheffield West | 62 |
| Shropshire | 16 |
| Solent and Forest | 19 |
| Somerset | 8 |
| South Cheshire | 27 |
| South Devon | 46 |
| South Downs | 27 |
| South Gwent and Islwyn | 10 |
| South Humberside | 12 |
| South Leicestershire | 27 |
| South Manchester | 29 |
| South West Lancs | 15 |
| South West Scotland | 41 |
| South West Thames | 24 |
| Springburn | 67 |
| Stockport | 21 |
| Suffolk | 22 |
| Surrey Downs | 16 |
| Surrey North | 16 |
| Swansea | 25 |
| Taff Rhondda | 4 |
| Tameside | 12 |
| Tayside | 28 |
| Tees North | 38 |
| Tees South | 24 |
| Thameside | 13 |
| Tyneside | 19 |
| Wakefield | 20 |
| Wales West | 2 |
| Walsall | 6 |
| Warwickshire | 19 |
| Wearside | 31 |
| West Herts | 11 |
| West Kent | 2 |
| West Lincolnshire | 21 |
| West Pennine | 15 |
| West Sussex | 8 |
| Wigan and Leigh | 5 |
| Wiltshire | 12 |
| Wirral | 42 |
| Wolverhampton | 21 |
| Worcestershire North | 22 |
| Yorkshire East | 14 |

## HEALTH

### Market Testing

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all those functions and areas in her Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department has already embarked on market-testing exercises for office services in its new buildings at Quarry house, Leeds and 80 London road, London and will be extending testing programme for this year to include a number of other areas of the Department's work.

### Health Statistics

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the percentage of the population who are *(a)* HIV positive *(b)* suffering from heart disease and *(c)* suffering from drug abuse related illnesses; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** It is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the percentage of the population infected with HIV as only those who perceive themselves to be at risk will seek a test. Up to March 1992 there had been 15,424 reports of people infected with HIV in England and Wales

to the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre. Anonymised HIV studies began in 1990 to obtain more accurate information about the prevalence of HIV.

Due to their nature, it is not possible to give reliable estimates of the incidence of coronary heart disease and drug abuse related illness within the population.

## Dentistry

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many orthodontic practitioners there are in the Wirral; what was the volume of treatments they have given in each of the last five years; and how many of such orthodontic treatments cost over £200, expressed both numerically and as a percentage of the whole.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There are four orthodontic practitioners on the Wirral family health services authority's dental list. More detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total cost of establishing a salaried dental practice within the framework of a family health services association; and what are its cost components.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The main elements involved in employing a salaried dentist are the salaries of the dentist and the auxiliary dental staff and the cost of the premises. The salary scales for a salaried dentist and dental auxiliaries range from £18,755 to £27,305 and from £6,118 to £18,039 respectively. The cost of premises varies from area to area.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated by salaried dentists in the last convenient yearly period in each of the regional health authorities in England and Wales; and what percentage of the total number of patients treated this represents in each region.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information collected about the number of patients treated is not distinguished by region. For the financial year 1991-92 there were 16,029 courses of treatment undertaken by salaried dentists in England and Wales. This represents 0·06 per cent. of the total.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salaried dentists have been appointed during the last three-year period.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In the three-year period to April 1992, 47 salaried dentists were appointed by family health services authorities.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many salaried dentists currently operate within the national health service; and what is their distribution on a family health services association basis.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information available at the end of April 1992 is shown in the table:

| *Family health services authority* | *Number of dentists* |
|---|---|
| Derbyshire | 1 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 3 |
| Essex | 2 |
| City and East London | 6 |
| Kent | 1 |
| Greenwich and Bexley | 7 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 29 |
| West Sussex | 1 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 1 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 1 |
| Sandwell | 1 |
| Liverpool | 2 |
| Total | 55 |

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what machinery is in place to monitor the cost-effectiveness and productivity of salaried dentists currently practising within the NHS.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This is the managerial responsibility of each family health services authority employing a salaried dentist.

## Hydatid Disease

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the figures for the incidence of hydatid disease for each area health authority in England and Wales, for the most recent three years that they are available; and what steps she is taking to eradicate this disease.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make additional Government funds available for an education programme in order to alert the public to the dangers of hydatidosis;

(2) how many people have been infected with hydatidosis in each of the past nine years;

(3) what advice she gives to the public regarding the dangers, particularly to children, of contact with dogs fed on uncooked meat and offal.

**Mr. Sackville:** Interim results from a Public Health Laboratory survey of the disease show the following estimated numbers of cases known to have originated in England and Wales, by year of diagnosis:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1984 | 13 |
| 1985 | 26 |
| 1986 | 11 |
| 1987 | 8 |
| 1988 | 7 |
| 1989 | 6 |
| 1990 | 1 |
| Year not known | 2 |

Thirty-nine of these cases were resident in Wales at time of diagnosis and 30 in England. The place of residence of the remaining five is unknown.

The apparent decline in incidence is welcome. When the full results of the PHLS are available, consideration will be given to whether any specific action is called for, such as a public education programme.

## Pacemakers (Removal)

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the cost to relatives in each district health authority and NHS trust in England of removing a pacemaker from a deceased patient;

(2) if she will consider whether the surgical procedure of removing a pacemaker from a cadaver could be carried out by undertakers.

**Mr. Sackville:** Guidance on the removal of pacemakers from deceased persons is in health notice (83)6, a copy of which is in the Library; this makes it clear that funeral undertakers may carry out the removal and that the cost in all cases should be met by the national health service.

## Grading Appeal Panels

**Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the expected overall cost of payments for fees and expenses to management side members who sit on nurses', midwives' and health visitors' national grading appeal panels.

**Mr. Sackville:** The overall cost of payments is not known at this stage, as there is no way of anticipating how many appeals will be lodged at national level. The decision to refer appeals to national level rests with the staff side organisations and trade unions.

## Osteopathy

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet with the principal of the British School of Osteopathy to discuss the school's future.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have no plans to do so.

## Asthma

**Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures her Department holds for the incidence of asthma in each of the last 10 years among *(a)* the whole population and *(b)* under 16-year-olds; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not held centrally.

## Abortions

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of abortions under the Abortion Act 1967 performed in England and Wales in 1991; what information is available about the number of such abortions at 25 weeks and over; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The total was 179,522 compared with 186,912 in 1990, an overall decrease of 4 per cent.

A total of 60 abortions were notified in England and Wales in 1991 at 25 weeks or more, of which eight were in the first quarter before the law on abortion changed on 1 April 1991. A more detailed analysis of these is as follows:

| *Number of weeks gestation* | *Number of abortions* |
|---|---|
| 25 | 18 |
| 26 | 17 |
| 27 | 9 |
| 28 | 6 |
| 29 | 5 |
| 30 | 2 |
| 31 | 1 |
| 33 | 1 |
| 36 | 1 |

Since 1 April 1991, for all terminations performed after the pregnancy had exceeded 24 weeks, the operating surgeon has been required to provide a full statement of the medical condition of the pregnant woman-foetus.

Of the 52 abortions performed at over 24 weeks between 1 April and 31 December 1991, one was under ground A—that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated—and the remaining 51 were under ground E—that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Of the ground E cases, 43 per cent. were central nervous system abnormalities, 22 per cent. were genetic abnormalities, 17 per cent. were multiple system abnormalities, 11 per cent. were renal abnormalities and 7 per cent. were cardiac abnormalities. Examinations of the notification forms in respect of these ground E cases confirms that severe abnormalities had been diagnosed as present in all the foetuses.

It is our intention to publish similar information about post-24-week abortions on a routine basis in the annual Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Abortion Statistics". It will not, for reasons of confidentiality, be possible to give more detailed information.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she has taken in the case referred to her by the hon. Member for Congleton in her letter of 22 June about midwives seeking to exercise their conscientious objection to participation in abortion; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The letter referred to was received on 23 June. It is being considered and a reply will be sent as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to prevent hospital managers taking disciplinary action against nursing and midwifery personnel who seek to exercise a conscientious objection to being involved in preparing women for abortion; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have no reason to believe the current arrangements for conscientious objections are not in general working well. The Department has received very few letters on this subject. With goodwill and sensitive management it should be possible to overcome any difficulties for people with genuine conscientious objection to abortion without recourse to administrative action or further legislation.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will now make it her policy to consult with interested parties with a view to reviewing the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have no plans to do so.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department about the right of general practitioners conscientiously to object to making arrangements for abortions when they do not believe it is in the best interests of their patients; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** A doctor should always act in the best interests of his/her patients. Section 4 of the Abortion Act

1967 sets out the position which applies to GPs who have a conscientious objection to participation in treatment authorised under that Act.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department about the right of general practitioners under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967 conscientiously to object to *(a)* prescribing the morning after pill and *(b)* fitting intra-uterine contraceptive devices on the basis that they may function as abortifacients; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** There is no obligation on GPs to provide contraceptive services if they do not wish to do so.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is given by her Department about the right of *(a)* midwives and nurses and *(b)* laboratory and other technicians under the terms of the Abortion Act 1967 conscientiously to object (i) to the taking of blood specimens and (ii) the processing of test results, respectively, which will lead to mothers being offered abortions if they are carrying babies with a minor handicap; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** Before decisions can be taken about any treatment or care, the full diagnostic process needs to be completed. In the case of pregnancy, if a serious problem is diagnosed, there will be a number of options to be considered. They may or may not include abortion. It must be in the best interests of all concerned that any decisions are made in the light of the fullest possible range of information. The expectation must therefore be that professional staff with the relevant experience will be involved in the diagnostic tests, to which an individual patient has consented, irrespective of the outcome.

**Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total number of abortions performed in the Stockport health authority under the Abortion Act 1967 since its implementation; and how many and what percentage of these abortions were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 15 June 1992]:* The number of abortions carried out in Stockport district health authority (DHA) is not released for reasons of confidentiality. However, 7,182 abortions have been performed, under the Abortion Act 1967, on residents of Stockport DHA during the period 1 January 1983 to 30 September 1991. The period in question refers to the first complete year for which data were collected for the Stockport DHA since its constitution on 1 April 1982, and to the latest date for which figures are available. None of these abortions was performed in an emergency "to save the life of the pregnant woman" (ground 5).

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions have been carried out under the Abortion Act 1967, since its coming into force, in the South West Thames region and the Wandsworth district, respectively; and how many and what percentage of these were carried out in an emergency to save the life of the mother.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* A total of 209,785 abortions have been performed, under the Abortion Act 1967, in the South West Thames regional health authority (RHA) for the period 1 January 1975 to 30 September 1991. The period in question refers to the first complete year for which data were collected for the South West Thames RHA since its constitution on 1 April 1974, and to the latest date for which figures are available. Of these, three (0 per cent.) were performed in an emergency "to save the life of the pregnant woman" (ground 5).

The number of abortions carried out in Wandsworth district health authority (DHA) is not released for reasons of confidentiality. However, 13,199 abortions have been performed, under the Abortion Act 1967, on residents of Wandsworth DHA during the period 1 January 1983 to 30 September 1991. The period in question refers to the first complete year for which data were collected for the Wandsworth DHA since its constitution on 1 April 1982, and to the latest date for which figures are available. None of these abortions was performed in an emergency "to save the life of the pregnant woman" (ground 5).

**Mr. Cormack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total number of abortions performed in each district health authority in Birmingham under the Abortion Act 1967 since its implementation; and how many and what percentage of these abortions were performed in emergency to save the life of the mother.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* The number of abortions carried out in each of the Birmingham district health authorities (DHAs) is not released for reasons of confidentiality. However, the numbers of abortions which have been performed, under the Abortion Act 1967, on residents of the Birmingham DHAs during the period 1 January 1983 to 30 September 1991 are listed in the table. The period in question refers to the first complete year for which data were collected for the Birmingham DHAs since the constitution on 1 April 1982, and to the latest date for which figures are available.

(1) Total number of abortions; (2) number and percentage of abortions performed in an emergency "to save the life of the pregnant woman" (ground 5), 1 January 1983 to 30 September 1991. Central, North, South, East and West Birmingham DHAs of residence.

*Birmingham DHAs of residence*

| | *Total* | *Ground 5* | *Ground 5 as a percentage of the total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Central[1] | 6,153 | 1 | 0 |
| North | 5,226 | 0 | 0 |
| South[1] | 7,225 | 1 | 0 |
| East | 6,415 | 0 | 0 |
| West | 9,467 | 0 | 0 |

[1] As Central and South Birmingham DHAs were merged in 1991, the numbers of abortions for these two authorities in 1991 are not included in the above table. In the newly formed DHA for the period 1 January to 30 September 1991 there was a total of 1,406 abortions, none of which was performed under ground 5.

## Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when her Department's survey into Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease will be published; and if this will be publicly available;

(2) how many cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease *(a)* deaths and *(b)* patients were reported in the last year for which figures are available;

(3) how many persons have died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the Yorkshire and Humberside area in the last two years for which records are available.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and West Devon (Miss Nicholson) on 23 June at columns *155-56*. The report from Dr. Will contains the relevant information requested on incidence in the Yorkshire and Humberside area.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how the information booklet, dealing with the cause and effects of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, has been distributed;

(2) how many booklets have been produced to inform relatives of patients suffering from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease about the cause and nature of the condition.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information booklet "Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease—A Guide" produced by the national Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance unit, based in Edinburgh, which is funded by the Department of Health and the Scottish Office Home and Health Department is distributed on a case-by-case basis to sufferers, their families, friends and carers. It has also been supplied to individuals who have written to the unit for more information.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what processes are available to identify Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in living individuals.

**Mr. Sackville:** Diagnosis of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in living individuals is by expert clinical assessment. There are no satisfactory tests that identify the disease conclusively, although electro-encephelographic testing can assist diagnosis. Histopathological testing of brain tissue can be used, very rarely, to confirm the diagnosis where there is a major doubt over the diagnosis.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has available to identify the cause of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

**Mr. Sackville:** The cause of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) has not yet been identified. The agent of the disease appears to be small, atypical—compared to conventional microbes—and transmissible. There also seems to be a genetic influence on the development of the disease. The precise nature of the interaction between the host and the agent remains unclear, but there is considerable research under way both in the United Kingdom and abroad to elucidate the factors producing the disease.

Most cases are sporadic and the factors which cause illness in these cases are not fully understood. However, in a few cases certain routes of transmisssion have been identified involving the use of human dura, corneal grafts or human growth hormone, and the exposure of the contaminated instruments during neurosurgical procedures. The Department has taken action to ensure that any potentially infected human tissue is no longer used in medical treatment.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action she will take to ensure that families with relatives suffering from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease are provided with advice on the cause and effects of the disease;

(2) what action has been taken to create a supportive agency in order to help patients' relatives where Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is suspected to be the cause of illness.

**Mr. Sackville:** Clinicians are responsible for providing information to patients under their care and to their families. In addition, when the national Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease surveillance unit in Edinburgh is notified, the patient and family are visited and information is provided about the disease. The unit also provides advice on the cause and effect of the disease to family members, friends and carers at other times, and is available to provide more information on Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease to other people who have individual concerns.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when procedures in neuro-surgery operations were altered in order to take precautions against contamination from agents causing Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

**Mr. Sackville:** Advice was first issued by the Advisory Group on the Management of Patients with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease to NHS hospitals in 1981. The guidance recommended that special precautions, including disposal of instruments, should be taken in surgical procedures involving the brain, spinal cord or eye. This advice remains current.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information she has available to identify the number of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease patients in *(a)* national health service hospitals, *(b)* private hospitals, *(c)* private nursing homes and *(d)* family homes;

(2) what provision is available within the national health service in order to treat Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease patients who suffer from the disease over a period of years.

**Mr. Sackville:** The national health service submits diagnostic information which would provide a broad estimate of the number of cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) which had been treated annually as in-patients in NHS hospitals. Information is not held centrally about the number of CJD patients in NHS hospitals, private hospitals, private nursing homes and family homes. Depending on their medical condition and personal circumstances, individual patients may be looked after in more than one location during the course of their illness.

Such patients have access to the full range of diagnostic and care facilities provided by the NHS.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many persons have contracted Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease who have not been treated with human growth hormone or involved in any neuro-surgical operations.

**Mr. Sackville:** It is not possible to determine causal or contributory factors in the majority of the 456 cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) identified since 1970. Of these, four are known to have had previous neurosurgery, which would not appear to be related to the development of their CJD, and a further 10 definite and one suspected case are known where transmission has occurred from other treatment.

### Population Statistics

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each travel-to-work area and for each district the estimated population as a percentage of the enumerated population according to the 1981 census.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Registrar-General does not make annual population estimates for travel-to-work areas. A comparison between the resident population enumerated in the 1981 census and the mid-year population estimates for 1981 for each local authority district is available in the Library. The population estimates include an allowance for under-enumeration. They also include students at their term-time address and armed forces where they were stationed, rather than where they were living on census day.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the travel-to-work areas and districts in rank order according to the 1991 census population as a percentage of the 1981 census population.

**Mr. Sackville:** Census figures from the 1991 census are not yet available for the resident populations of all local authority districts, nor have travel-to-work areas based on the 1991 census yet been calculated. The 1991 census preliminary report for England and Wales, a copy of which is in the Library, contains provisional figures for the population present on census day in 1981 and 1991 in each local authority district. Table 5 of the report ranks counties in order of percentage change.

### Human Growth Hormone

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if persons who have received human growth hormone treatment are excluded from organ donor programmes.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department has advised clinicians, when considering organ transplantation, to check whether or not the donor had been treated with human growth hormone at any time prior to May 1985 when that treatment was withdrawn.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to prevent recipients of human growth hormone treatments becoming blood donors.

**Mr. Sackville:** Recipients of pituitary derived human growth hormone are included in a list of specific groups who must not give blood. This list is shown to all potential blood donors. Furthermore, when human growth hormone recipients are counselled as part of the national counselling programme now under way they are advised not to give blood.

### Spongiform Encephalopathies

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she received a copy of the World Health Organisation report dealing with spongiform encephalopathies in humans and animals; and what response she has given;

(2) if she will make a statement on the reasons for restricting the distribution of the World Health Organisation consultation paper dealing with spongiform encephalopathies in humans and animals; and if she will now publish it:

(3) if she will list those who have received a copy of the World Health Organisation consultation paper dealing with spongiform encephalopathies in humans and animals;

(4) if she will place in the Library a copy of the World Health Organisation consultation paper dealing with spongiform encephalopathies in humans and animals.

**Mr. Sackville:** I understand the report was first issued by the World Health Organisation in November 1991 on a limited basis to member Governments. However, a memorandum based on the report has not been published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation, volume 70, No. 2 at pages 183-90, and copies have been placed in the Library. We have also asked the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee to consider the report and advise on its implications.

### Opencast Mining

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken into the link between respiratory problems in individuals and the proximity of opencast mining sites; and if she will establish such an inquiry.

**Mr. Sackville:** A detailed examination of evidence relating to the possible effects of opencast mining upon the health of local residents was undertaken in 1988 and 1989 in connection with an application to establish a mine in south Wales. It concluded that there was insufficient evidence of harm arising from opencast mining operations to justify the refusal of the application. The findings were accepted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and further investigation was not considered necessary.

### Juvenile Smoking

**Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, as part of her departmental campaign to discourage juvenile smoking, she will consider the curtailment of tobacco advertising in amusement arcades where children participate in video games simulating motor racing.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The voluntary agreement between the Government and the tobacco industry on tobacco advertising and promotion does not allow advertisements which appeal to children more than to adults. If the hon. Member has examples of tobacco advertisements which he considers breach this agreement, he should bring them to the attention of the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship.

### Medical Training

**Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the EC directives governing the system of specialist medical training have not been implemented in the United Kingdom over the last 15 years; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Directives 75/362/EEC and 75/363/EEC were implemented into United Kingdom law by the Medical Qualifications (EEC Recognition) Order 1977. However, doubt has been cast on whether the present United Kingdom system relating to specialist training fully reflects these directives. The Chief Medical Officer is holding a series of meetings with the medical profession to address these issues.

Directives 89/594/EEC and 90/658/EEC, which made minor amendments to 75/362/EEC, have not been implemented. Steps are being taken to introduce them into United Kingdom law.

**Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to hold in public the discussions between her Department, the medical royal colleges, the General Medical Council and the British Medical Association concerning the sytem of specialist medical training in the United Kingdom; and if she will make it her policy to ensure that a wide-ranging debate, including patients' representatives, will be held on the proposals that emerge.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** No. Discussions will continue to be held in private. However, consultation will take place on any proposals that emerge.

### NHS Superannuation Scheme

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the framework document of the "next steps" agency for the national health service superannuation scheme will be published for England and Wales.

**Mr. Sackville:** In a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on 14 May at column 167, I announced the Department of Health's NHS superannuation branch which administers the scheme for England and Wales, is to be launched as a "next steps" agency in the second half of 1992. The framework document under which the agency will operate will be published before the launch date.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health who has been appointed as a consultant to her Department for market testing.

**Mr. Sackville:** In line with the proposals in the "Competing for Quality" White Paper, KPMG Management Consulting assisted the Department in identifying activities that might be suitable for market testing. Symonds Facilities Management plc was appointed to advise on a market-testing strategy for office services for the Department's new buildings at Quarry house, Leeds, and 80 London road, London.

### Company Information

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent it is her Department's practice to treat as confidential information on companies and company directors conducting work approved by her Department which is available from information supplied to Companies House and accessible to the general public.

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* Any information supplied to Companies House which is known to be accessible to the general public, and can be directly obtained, would not be treated as confidential.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 30th June 1992*

## TRANSPORT

### London Underground

**Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many administrative staff were employed by London Underground as a whole *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* currently; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** I understand that 1,250 administrative staff were employed by London Underground as at 25 April 1992. No comparable figure is available for 1979, which was before London Underground became a nationalised industry. However, the number of administrative staff will undoubtedly have increased over the period, as a result of the number of major capital investment projects which London Underground now has to manage.

### Motorway Service Areas

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway service areas were built each year from 1979 to the current year.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The information requested is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1979 | None |
| 1980 | None |
| 1981 | None |
| 1982 | None |
| 1983 | None |
| 1984 | None |
| 1985 | 1 (Ferrybridge, M62) |
| 1986 | 2 (South Mimms, M25; Sedgemoor southbound, M5) |
| 1987 | 1 (Sedgemoor northbound, M5) |
| 1988 | None |
| 1989 | None |
| 1990 | 2 (Thurrock, M25; Tamworth, M42) |
| 1991 | None |
| 1992 | None |

These details cover only motorway services areas in England; those in Wales and Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on the provision of motorway service areas following the publication of his consultation document in February; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Some 200 responses to the consultation document have been received. They are currently being considered and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to make a further statement shortly.

### Auxiliary Coastguards

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the review by the regional controller of the detailed proposals for the reorganisation of auxiliary coastguards in Cornwall.

**Mr. Norris:** Her Majesty's Coastguard's regional controller Falmouth undertook a reappraisal of the operational requirements of the sector review in the south-west and submitted his proposals to coastguard headquarters. Additional operational evidence to substantiate the proposals was required by coastguard headquarters, which is currently being studied.

### Local Authority Airports

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to require local authorities to sell their shareholding in local authority airports to the general public and private sector institutions; what plans he has to encourage local authorities to sell such shares to the general public and private sector institutions before he requires them to do so; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *31*.

### Roads (Adoption)

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to amend his Department's circular 3/92 on transport and policies programme submissions, to include the adoption of roads as one of his principal objectives for capital spending on roads.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I have no such plans.

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will extend the criteria used in considering application for transport supplementary grants to include the adoption of roads.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** No. Transport supplementary grant is for capital expenditure cost on existing local authority roads. Its main purpose is to finance improvements on roads of more than local importance.

### South Circular Road

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to bring forward proposals arising from the south circular assessment study before 16 July.

**Mr. Norris:** No. More time is needed to consider these proposals. I want to be sure that any which are taken forward are fully justified on environmental, safety and traffic capacity grounds.

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further plans he has for land acquisitions in connection with the A205 south circular Catford relief road; and what discussions he has had with *(a)* the London residuary body and *(b)* the London borough of Lewisham on the land acquisition programme.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department has for some time been negotiating the acquisition of a small plot of land, outside

the compulsory purchase order originally promoted by the Greater London Council for this improvement scheme. This was school land, formerly owned by the Inner London education authority and transferred to the London residuary body—now the responsibility of the royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Solicitors for the parties are in the process of drawing up the necessary transfer documents. The Department has no further plans for land acquisition in connection with this trunk road scheme. The Department has had no discussions with the London borough of Lewisham on the land acquisition programme for this scheme.

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer on 24 June, *Official Report*, column *245*, on what date he expects to consult local authorities and others about the further recommendations of his Department's consultants, Travers Morgan, arising from the south circular assessment study.

**Mr. Norris:** I do not envisage further consultation on recommendations made by the consultants who carrried out the south circular assessment study. We informed Lewisham borough council in March that a limited scheme to improve conditions at the A205/Burnt Ash Hill junction had been added to the Department's national roads programme. We shall be consulting them further when more detailed proposals are available. The case for other limited road improvement schemes on the A205 is still being considered. Consultation on individual schemes will follow as and when appropriate in accordance with the Department's normal procedures. I cannot forecast at this stage when that might be.

### Milk Floats

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures are available on the number of accidents and injuries associated with milk floats.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Milk floats cannot be specifically identified from accident records held by the Department. However, using vehicle registration marks, additional vehicle information is obtained from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Swansea for about 80 per cent. of vehicles involved in injury accidents. The table shows information on injury accidents in 1990 where DVLA data indicate the involvement of floats. The 1991 data are not yet available.

*Injury accidents involving floats and casualties in those accidents: by float propulsion type: Great Britain: 1990*

*Number*

| *Propulsion type* | *Injury accidents* | *Casualties* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Fatal* | *Serious* | *Slight* |
| Electric | 124 | 3 | 31 | 126 |
| Other | 64 | 1 | 14 | 70 |

### A45

**Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the proposals on the renaissance project road works affecting the A45 near the national exhibition centre; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** We have assessed the scheme against the usual criteria for transport supplementary grant: its eligibility as a scheme on a road of more than local importance; its economic performance and its effects on road safety, the environment, the local community and local industry and commerce. It performed well against these criteria and has been accepted for transport supplementary grant and credit approvals from the present financial year onwards. The renaissance area road and the A45 to which it connects are not trunk roads.

### Bus Deregulation

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what means he plans to ensure that after the privatisation and deregulation of bus services in London *(a)* standards of service for the public are maintained throughout the week, *(b)* conditions of employment facilities and health checks for the staff are of the same level and *(c)* that in central London traffic congestion is not increased by unregulated flows of privately owned buses.

**Mr. Norris:** I am confident that competition will ensure a high standard of service on those routes which are operated commercially. The London Bus Executive will specify service standards for uncommercial routes operated under contract.

The health and safety of employees will, as in other industries, be the responsibility of the individual employer, who will be subject to inspection by the Health and Safety Executive. I do not anticipate a great influx of new operators into central London, where the costs of bus operation are high. The traffic commissioner and local authorities will, in any case, have adequate powers available to them to deal with any congestion problems that do arise.

### National Exhibition Centre

**Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the national exhibition centre about the volume of road traffic attracted to the centre when the motor show and the ideal homes exhibition are held at the same time; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** My Department chairs a working group of all the interests involved, including the national exhibition centre, the local highway authorities and the police, to draw up proposals for managing motor show and ideal homes exhibition traffic. We will do what we can to ensure that the traffic runs as smoothly as possible.

### Cycle Parking

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue guidelines to local authorities on the secure parking of cycles on roadsides and pavements.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *115*.

### A628

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish preferred routes for the A628 Tintwistle, Hollingworth, Mottram bypass.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I cannot give a firm date. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will introduce proposals for public consultation as soon as he can.

### Emergency Standby Vessels

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many standby vessels have been assessed as satisfactory in terms of the regulations and criteria set out in the revised code for the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations; what proportion of the fleet of standby vessels this number represents; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** Forty-three standby vessels, representing 22 per cent. of the fleet, have been assessed and comply with the revised code. A further 75 vessels are at various stages of assessment.

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many standby vessels have been assessed as unsuitable or inadequate in relation to the regulations and criteria set out in the revised code for the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations; and what action was taken in each case.

**Mr. Norris:** Full compliance with the code is not required until 31 December 1992 to allow vessel owners time to carry out any modifications found necessary. Most of the 75 vessels currently under assessment will require some modification and owners are being advised accordingly; it is for owners to decide if the cost of modification renders the further use of their vessels uneconomic.

### Harbour Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory protection exists for constables of police forces under the provisions of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 from unfair dismissal; what statutory restrictions exist on their taking industrial action; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trade union.

**Mr. Norris:** I understand that the provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 do not apply to persons employed as police constables under any enactment. The provisions of the 1847 Act, which are incorporated in various local harbours Acts, cover only the swearing in of constables and their dismissal from that office by the justices. They do not mention conditions of employment.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutory protection exists for constables of the Port of Tilbury police from unfair dismissal; what statutory restrictions exist on their taking industrial action; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trade union.

**Mr. Norris:** There is provision for a statutory police federation at the Port of Tilbury. The legislation debars constables from membership of a trade union. I understand that taking part in industrial action would be a disciplinary offence.

### Road Traffic Act 1991

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1991 are coming into effect on 1 July; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The whole of part I of the Road Traffic Act 1991 will come into force on 1 July, with the exception of the provisions already in force and sections 41 and 42—variation of parking charges—which have yet to come into force. Schedules 1 and 2 and various consequential amendments and repeals will also come into force on that date.

### Saltford Bypass

**Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the environmental study report of the proposed route from Keynsham to Beckington, south of Bath, including the Saltford bypass.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The report on this study has not yet been completed. I will make an announcement when I am satisfied that an environmentally acceptable route can be found for a new road bypassing Bath to the south and west.

### M1-M62 Link

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if proposals for a link road between the M1 and M62 require the construction of a motorway service station.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Scheme planning is at too early a stage to assess the requirement for service facilities.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the required alterations in *(a)* electricity supply cables, *(b)* gas pipelines, *(c)* water supply and *(d)* telecommunications, for the purple and yellow routes proposed for a link road between the M1 and M62 motorways.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Information on existing service apparatus has been gathered from the relevant authorities. An assessment has been made of the possible impact on this apparatus, but only in broad terms appropriate to the present early stage of scheme development.

## EDUCATION

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Forman:** The number and percentage of registered disabled staff in each grade specified and the overall number for the Department are:

| | *Number in grade* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Grades 1 to 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Grade 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Grade 7 | 0 | 0 |

| | Number in grade | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Overall | 70 | 2·5 |

The figures include staff in the Teachers Pensions Agency. They also include 386 of Her Majesty's inspectorate staff, of whom the majority, together with their support staff, will transfer to the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector which is to be considered as a separate non-ministerial department from 1 September 1992.

### Mature Students

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of mature students attending colleges and universities in the United Kingdom for each year since 1981.

**Mr. Forman:** Information is given in the table:

*Mature, home domiciled students[1] attending universities (including Open University), polytechnics and colleges in Great Britain*

| Year | Number (thousands) |
|---|---|
| 1981 | 165·4 |
| 1982 | 165·7 |
| 1983 | 174·7 |
| 1984 | 175·0 |
| 1985 | 195·3 |
| 1986 | 215·8 |
| 1987 | 218·9 |
| 1988 | 234·5 |
| 1989 | 250·1 |
| 1990 | 274·8 |

[1] Mature students defined as those enrolling as first years on first degree and sub-degree courses aged 21 or over and on postgraduate courses at age 25 or over.

### Mandatory Awards

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to review the list of courses regarded as degree equivalent which qualify for mandatory awards.

**Mr. Forman:** My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

### Education Funding, Bradford

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will arrange to meet a representative group of parents and governors during his visit to Bradford on 13 July to discuss the effect of the current financial position of schools on the numbers of teaching staff; if he will also arrange to meet the chair of the local education authority to discuss education funding in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** Arrangements have already been made for my right hon. Friend's visit to Bradford and it is not possible for him to include additional meetings in his itinerary.

### Women Engineers

**Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many women took up *(a)* further engineering courses and *(b)* higher engineering courses in (i) 1969, (ii) 1985 and (iii) 1991.

**Mr. Forman:** The number of women on engineering and technology courses in England was:

*Thousands*

| | 1985-86 | 1990-91 |
|---|---|---|
| Further education enrolments | [1]18 | 19 |
| Higher education enrolments (including universities' student numbers) | [1]7 | 11 |

[1] Figure adjusted to be broadly comparable in coverage with 1990-91.

In 1969-70 the information collected was for England and Wales.

*Thousands*

| | 1969-70 |
|---|---|
| Further education students | 6·0 |
| Higher education students (including universities) | 0·5 |

### Transitional Funds

**Mr. Fatchett** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the transitional grants to be paid to further education and sixth form colleges by individual institution.

**Mr. Forman:** The allocation of transitional funds to colleges will be for the Further Education Funding Council, which is expected to be formed soon.

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the percentage of the £25 million Further Education Funding Council transitional fund to be granted directly to further education and sixth form colleges.

**Mr. Forman:** Allocations direct to colleges are expected to account for about two thirds of the £25 million transitional funding to be made available to the Further Education Funding Council in 1992-93. The balance will be required to meet the running costs of the council and the costs of supporting colleges' preparations for incorporation on a national basis.

### "Getting Colleges Ready"

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the total cost of the current Touche Ross survey "Getting Colleges Ready"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** Information about the cost of the study carried out by Touche Ross is commercially confidential. The handbook prepared by Touche Ross as a result of the study, entitled "Getting Your College Ready", was issued at the end of April and has been widely welcomed by colleges.

### Pilot Tests

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the pilot tests in English for 14-year-olds; and what part was played by the Northern Examining Association in the development of the tests.

**Mr. Patten:** Last year, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, with the agreement of my

predecessor and of the Secretary of State for Wales, commissioned the preparation of the first statutory tests for 14-year-olds in mathematics, science, English, Welsh and technology, which will be held in 1993.

The development of the tests is well advanced, and a successful national pilot of the mathematics and science tests was held earlier this month. At the same time, prototype English and technology tests were trialled in a small number of schools in both England and Wales, and prototype tests in Welsh were trialled in some Welsh schools.

As work on the English tests has developed, it has become clear that some changes are needed in order to secure rigour and a proper test of the breadth and depth of pupils' reading. On the advice of the School Examinations and Assessment Council, under its chairman, Lord Griffiths, I have therefore decided that the English tests for 1993 should consist of:

questions on a set Shakespeare play;
questions on a standard anthology of short stories, poems and extracts chosen to reflect the breadth of reading required by the English national curriculum order, to be distributed to secondary schools in advance of the tests;
an objective test of pupils' basic reading skills, including their grammar and vocabulary;
a test of comprehension of an unseen passage, which will also serve as a test of pupils' writing skills;
a separate test of pupils' imaginative writing.

In view of these changes, SEAC intends to invite fresh tenders to write the tests for 1993. It will be open to the Northern Examining Association, which has worked on the tests so far, to tender for this new contract. I am placing copies of the specification in the Library.

This decision will ensure that the first tests for 14-year-olds in 1993 will be academically rigorous; will reflect the breadth of reading specified in the national curriculum; and will prove manageable for teachers and stimulating for pupils.

## Special Educational Needs

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to publish the planned consultative proposals to shorten the special educational assessment procedure, to introduce the right for the parents of children with special educational needs to express a preference for a school and to improve parental rights of appeal against a local authority decision; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** My noble Friend the Baroness Blatch announced in another place on 29 June that we shall issue shortly a consultation paper which will set out the Government's proposals for legislation relating to special educational needs in these respects.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average cost of producing a statement of special educational needs in each local education authority.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not available centrally.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to amend the statement of special educational needs so that the provision required for the pupil is precisely stated.

**Mr. Forth:** Guidance to ensure that any provision set out in a statement of educational needs is stated precisely already exists in circular 22/89, September 1989, and its addendum, March 1992, issued jointly by the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health. However, as part of the Government's current initiative in special education, my right hon. Friend will shortly be consulting widely on the procedures for issuing statements of special educational needs.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that all inspections of schools will involve an assessment of the school's work with children with special educational needs.

**Mr. Forth:** At present, all full inspections of schools by Her Majesty's inspectorate cover all aspects of provision, including special educational needs. The arrangements from 1 September 1992 will be a matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to clarify the requirements for formula funding schemes to allow the local education authority accurately to determine the level of funding required for each pupil's special educational needs to be met as defined by their statement.

**Mr. Forth:** Guidance to authorities on the question of formula funding for special educational needs is provided at paragraph 101 of DES circular 7/91. My right hon. Friend will consider the possibility of further guidance in the light of the wide-ranging consultation on special educational needs which he is about to undertake.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce national guidelines defining the level of responsibility mainstream schools should have for pupils with special educational needs.

**Mr. Forth:** This question will be considered in the light of responses to the wide-ranging consultation on special educational needs which my right hon. Friend will shortly undertake.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average length of time it takes to produce a statement of special educational needs in each local education authority.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not available centrally.

## Pupil Exclusions

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to make a study of indefinite pupil exclusions from school;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to collect statistics from local education authorities on pupil exclusions annually; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** Information on pupils permanently excluded from school is already being collected from local education authorities over a two-year period starting with the summer term 1990 under the national exclusions reporting system (NERS). My right hon. Friend will review the need for further statistics or studies in the light of the findings from NERS and other intelligence.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) whether he will issue guidance to local

education authorities on *(a)* the recording of pupil exclusions from school and *(b)* the tuition of pupils excluded from school;

(2) whether he will commission an independent study of the underlying causes of the increase in pupil exclusions from schools.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend will consider the need for such guidance, and for further study, as part of his forthcoming review of the operation of the exclusion provisions in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 in the light of the returns from the national exclusions reporting system and other information.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to publish the report on the two-year study of pupil exclusions.

**Mr. Forth:** Final returns under the national exclusions reporting system must reach the Department for analysis by 30 September. When that process is completed, and in the light of his review of the exclusions procedures more generally, my right hon. Friend will consider how the information should be made available.

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he intends to monitor the incidence of exclusions from school among pupils from ethnic minorities.

**Mr. Forth:** Information on the ethnic origin of pupils permanently excluded from school is already collected under the national exclusions reporting system.

### "Getting in on the Act"

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will publish his response to the joint Audit Commission and Her Majesty's inspectorate's report "Getting in on the Act"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** A press statement welcoming the publication of the report was issued on 25 June and was placed in the Library.

### Extra Education Assistance

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce national guidelines for education authorities to identify when a child requires extra educational assistance.

**Mr. Forth:** The Government are already considering the development of this sort of guidance. My right hon. Friend will be consulting the local authority associations shortly.

### Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to clarify the number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the provision currently available to them and to assess the effectiveness of such provision.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Under the terms of the Education Act 1981, provision is made not for different categories of handicap but for the special educational needs of individul children. Proposals to improve access to the present arrangements for assessments and statements will be brought forward later in the year.

### Education Act 1981

**Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to introduce incentives for local education authorities to implement fully the Education Act 1981.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend will consider fully this proposal, which is one of the recommendations of the recent Audit Commission/Her Majesty's inspectorate study of special educational needs, later in the year. He wishes first to receive responses to a wide-ranging consultation exercise on special educational needs which he is about to undertake.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Members Pay and Allowances

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he drew the question of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, *Official Report*, 11 November 1991, column *365*, to the attention of the review body; and if he has now received a reply.

**Mr. Newton:** My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) drew the hon. Member's question to the attention of the Top Salaries Review Body on 12 November 1991.

I understand that a reply was not expected.

### Energy Select Committee

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if the Energy Committee will be retained in its current status as a separate Select Committee; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** No. It is the Government's intention to have, where possible, Select Committees shadowing the principal Government Departments.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively, and overall in his Office are women.

**Mr. Newton:** The Privy Council Office has no staff at grades 1 or 2. At grades 3 to 7 it has five staff, one of whom is a woman (grade 7). Overall, 43 per cent. of current Privy Council Office staff are women.

## HEALTH

### Counterfeit Medicines

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many instances of counterfeit medicines reaching the United Kingdom market have been reported to the Medicines Control Agency in each of the years 1989, 1990 and 1991; and if she will state by what means those counterfeit products were detected.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There was one instance in 1989 and one in 1990. Both instances were reported to the Medicines Control Agency by pharmaceutical companies, and arose from inquiries made by those companies.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she has any plans to introduce new measures to reduce the risk of counterfeit medicines being introduced into the United Kingdom.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There are no plans to introduce new measures. Any reports of alleged import of counterfeit medicines into the United Kingdom are immediately investigated by the enforcement unit of the Medicines Control Agency. The United Kingdom licensing system introduced by the Medicines Act 1968 and covering the import, sale and production of medicinal products is continually kept under review to ensure appropriate safeguards against counterfeit products are maintained.

## Family Health Service Authorities

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a list of family health service authorities showing their expenditure under the indicative prescribing scheme for 1991-92; if she will set out the figures for actual spending as a percentage of their allocation; what is the expenditure per head in each family health service authority; and on how many occasions, in each family health service authority, the family health service authority made inquiries of general practitioners about their prescribing practices.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information on how many occasions, in each family health service authority, the family health service authority made inquiries of general practitioners about their prescribing practices is not held centrally.

The other information requested has been placed in the Library.

## Asthma Inhalers

**Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures her Department holds for the estimated total numbers of prescriptions for asthma inhalers to *(a)* the whole population and *(b)* under 16-year-olds in the United Kingdom for each of the last 10 years; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information on the number of prescriptions for individual drug preparations by population groups in the United Kingdom is not available. The table sets out information on the number of prescriptions for the treatment of asthma by British National Formulary therapeutic classification for England only for 1982-91. For 1991 the table also shows the total prescriptions for asthma preparations for "Young People" based on exemption categories.

*Prescriptions for the treatment of asthma*

*Millions*

| *Year* | *Total* | *Inhalations* |
|---|---|---|
| 1982 | 15·3 | 6·5 |
| 1983 | 16·5 | 7·6 |
| 1984 | 17·7 | 8·5 |
| 1985 | 19·0 | 9·7 |
| 1986 | 20·0 | 10·6 |
| 1987 | 21·0 | 11·6 |
| 1988 | 22·6 | 12·6 |
| 1989 | 22·9 | 12·9 |
| 1990 | 24·1 | 13·7 |
| 1991 | 27·6 | 14·1 |
| *Young people* | | |
| 1991 | 13·8 | — |

*Notes:*

1. The data from 1982 to 1990 are estimates based on a sample of 1 in 200 prescriptions dispensed by chemists and appliance contractors.
2. The data for 1991 are actual prescriptions and include those dispensed by chemist and appliance contractors, dispensing doctors, and personal administration prescriptions.
3. The data for the 1991 exemption category "Young People", i.e. children under age 16 and persons under age 19 in full-time education, are based on a sample of 1 in 20 exemption prescriptions dispensed by chemist and appliance contractors.
4. All figures for 1991 are based on the new PCA statistical returns and refer to the number of prescriptions items as opposed to fees used in previous years.

## Midwives (Grading)

**Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what response she has made to the report "Post Registration Education in Clinical Midwifery", funded by the Department of Education and Science with reference to the differences between the regions in the clinical grading of staff midwife and midwifery sister posts; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make a statement about the differences between regions in the grading of similar clinical midwifery posts;

(3) what response she has made to the recommendations of the review body concerning the differences between regions in the grading of similar midwifery posts.

**Mr. Sackville:** The responsibility for grading all midwifery posts rests with the employing authorities. Complete uniformity in the outcome of grading decisions could not be expected, and variations between regions and countries reflect local organisation of services and the skill mix necessary.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in her Department are women.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is shown in the table:

| *Grade* | *Total staff* | *Women* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Number* | *Per cent.* |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0·0 |
| 2 | 7 | 2 | 28·6 |
| 3 | 27 | 6 | 22·2 |
| 4 | 29 | 9 | 31·0 |
| 5 | 204 | 61 | 29·9 |
| 6 | 173 | 42 | 24·3 |
| 7 | 532 | 151 | 28·4 |
| All grades[1] | 4,951 | 2,704 | 54·6 |

[1] Including grades 1 to 7.

*Notes:*

1. Based on figures obtained from the Department's personnel computer system as at 23 June 1992.

2. Figures exclude secondees into the Department, special hospitals, youth treatment centres, members of staff on special leave without pay and casual staff of all grades.

### Adoption

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make representations to the Romanian Committee for Adoptions on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. D. Mann of Presteigne, Powys in support of their application for adoption of a child from a Romanian orphanage;

(2) if she will make representations to the Romanian Committee for Adoptions on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Robinson of Brecon, Powys in support of their application for adoption of a child from a Romanian orphanage;

(3) what representations her Department has made to the Romanian Committee for Adoptions on behalf of prospective British adoptive parents failing to meet the conditions contained in the agreement on adoptions signed by the Government on 19 March.

**Mr. Yeo:** Prior to signing the agreement between the United Kingdom and the Romanian Committee for Adoptions on 19 March 1992, officials made several approaches to the committee to obtain exemptions to conditions set out in their draft, including a waiver for those prospective adopters who had already applied. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson and Mr. and Mrs. Mann are among those who had made applications.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the British Government intend to seek re-negotiation of the agreement on adoptions signed by her Department and the Romanian Committee on Adoptions on 19 March.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Romanian Committee for Adoptions has agreed to meet officials in December this year to review the working arrangements of the agreement on the adoption of children from Romania to the United Kingdom. The meeting will provide an opportunity for discussions about the conditions contained in the agreement.

### Residential Homes

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she plans to ensure that people in residential homes who experience a sudden down-turn in health will be able to be transferred to nursing homes.

**Mr. Yeo:** From April 1993 local authorities will be responsible for assessing individuals' needs and arranging placements in residential care and nursing homes for those people who need to be publicly supported. Our guidance makes clear that care needs should be regularly reviewed and care packages revised as necessary.

### Solvent Abuse

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures the Government are taking to reduce the incidence of solvent abuse among juveniles; what representations she has received about the work of Re-Solv in this field; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In February of this year the Government launched a national publicity campaign on solvent misuse consisting of television and press advertising. The objective of the campaign was to raise parental awareness of the problem, and to make further information available by means of a booklet. Re-Solv played a valuable part in the development of the publicity campaign. The Department has recently awarded Re-Solv a grant of £33,000 per year for the next two years towards their central administration costs. The Department of Trade and Industry contributed £37,000 earlier this year towards the cost of producing a new training package developed by Re-Solv to help retailers identify and deal with solvent abusers. An exhibition of Re-Solv's work in combating solvent misuse was held recently in the Upper Waiting Hall.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in her Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is shown in the table:

| *Grade* | *Total staff (numbers)* | *Registered disabled people* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Number* | *Percentage* |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 27 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 29 | 2 | 6·9 |
| 5 | 204 | 1 | 0·5 |
| 6 | 173 | 0 | 0 |
| 7 | 532 | 3 | 0·6 |
| All grades (including 1-7) | 4,951 | 72 | 1·5 |

*Notes:*
1. Based on figures obtained from the Department's personnel computer system as at 23 June 1992.
2. The figures exclude secondees into the Department, special hospitals, youth treatment centres, members of staff on special leave without pay and casual staff of all grades.

### Community Care

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether KPMG Management Consultants have completed their report on local authorities community care plans; whether she will place this report in the Library; and what was the cost of this consultancy exercise.

**Mr. Yeo:** KPMG Peat Marwick were commissioned to look at how the independent sector was being involved in the preparation of community care plans. Their report has recently been received and we are considering how its findings may best be made available. The cost of the consultancy is £42,200 exclusive of VAT and expenses.

### Nurses' Grading

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurse clinical grading appeals remain outstanding; what is the average time that has elapsed since they were lodged; how long she expects it will take to clear the backlog; what steps she is taking to expedite hearings; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department does not collect information on appeals at employing authority level. The

director of personnel of the NHS management executive wrote to regional general managers on 31 March stressing the importance of ensuring that any remaining backlog of cases at local level should be cleared as soon as possible.

At 31 May 1992 there were 20,412 appeals outstanding at regional level (including those in Scotland and Wales) and 1,890 at national level. The Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council has recently reached agreement on streamlining the appeals process by setting up experimental standing appeals panels at national level—these have now started work—and by providing a facility for referring appeals direct from employing authority to national level if both parties agree. These changes should enable outstanding appeals to be dealt with more expeditiously, although it is too early to estimate how long it will take to complete the exercise.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many clinical grading appeals have been submitted by nurses in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland since the start of the current process.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department does not collect information on appeals at employing authority level. In England at 31 May, 20,775 appeals had been submitted at regional level and 1,430 at national level. Information relating to Scotland and Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

## Ambulance Service (London)

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost per head of population of the ambulance service in London; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The London ambulance service has advised me that the net cost of the ambulance service in London for 1991-92 was £9·48 per head of population.

## AIDS

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much Government money has been spent on HIV/AIDS awareness and related campaigns over the past five years; and how many HIV/AIDS cases have been diagnosed during that period.

**Mr. Sackville:** The table sets out the allocations from April 1988 onwards to the health education authority (HEA) towards the development of HIV and AIDS related public awareness and education initiatives. These amounts include the contributions towards the costs of the National AIDS Helpline and related telephone information services. Not shown in the tables are the amounts spent by other Government Departments on HIV prevention work within their own spheres of interest.

Between 1985-86 and 1992-93 the Government have allocated over £73 million to the development of the national AIDS public education campaign. Over and above this, since 1989-90 contributions have been made towards the additional costs incurred by regional and district health authorities in the development of local HIV prevention initiatives. For 1992-93 these amount to £21 million.

*Education HEA/helpline*

| *Year* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 10·00 |
| 1989-90 | 12·00 |
| 1990-91 | 10·00 |
| 1991-92 | 11·00 |
| 1992-93 | 11·225 |

The number of HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed for the five year period within the United Kingdom is as follows:
1988 to the end of March 1992—4,574 AIDS cases.
1988 to the end of March 1992—9,141 HIV infected persons.

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study has been undertaken of the similarity between the type of birth control practised in some parts of Africa and known homosexual behaviour, and the implications of this for the increase in HIV/AIDS among heterosexuals in Africa and homosexuals elsewhere.

**Mr. Sackville:** I will write to my hon. Friend with the information that he requests as soon as it is available.

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what forecasts were made by her Department for the number of heterosexuals likely to be affected by the HIV/AIDS virus in each of the past five years; and what were the actual numbers so affected, excluding drug users and the suffering from contaminated blood.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Day report, "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in England and Wales" estimated that at the end of 1988 between 13,000 and 26,000 individuals were infected with HIV and that between 750 and 3,750 had been infected through sexual intercourse between men and women. Up to the end of March 1992, 1,769 cases of HIV infection acquired through heterosexual intercourse had been reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre. This underestimates the true level of infection as only those who recognise themselves to be at risk will seek a test. The Day report did not make predictions for individual years for HIV infected persons.

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of those affected by the HIV/AIDS virus over the past five years have been known to be *(a)* homosexual and *(b)* heterosexual, excluding drug users and those suffering from contaminated blood.

**Mr. Sackville:** By the end of March 1992 there had been a cumulative total of 15,501 newly diagnosed HIV-1 infected persons in England, Wales and Northern Ireland reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre (all exposure categories combined) since the HIV test became available in 1984. This number may considerably underestimate the total number infected in certain exposure categories because in order to have their infection diagnosed infected persons must recognise their risk, present for an HIV-1 test and agree to have a test after pre-test counselling. A detailed breakdown is contained in the following table 12 from the AIDS/HIV Quarterly Surveillance Tables (No. 15, Data to end of March 1992).

*Table 12*
*Trends in exposure category distribution (per cent.) of HIV-1 infected persons*
*Reported to 31 March 1992*
*England, Wales and Northern Ireland*

| Year of report | Between men | Sexual intercourse Between men and women Male | Female | NS | Injecting drug use[1] Male | Female | NS | Mother to infant | Sub total 100 % | Blood[2] | Other/undetermined Male | Female | NS | Grand total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To end | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1985 | 1,400 | 19 | 12 | 4 | 51 | 20 | — | 3 | 1,509 | 649 | 139 | 6 | 14 | 2,317 |
| | (93) | | (2) | | | (5) | | (<1) | | | | | | |
| 1986 | 1608 | 40 | 49 | 1 | 169 | 69 | 2 | 8 | 1,946 | 361 | 114 | 7 | 3 | 2,431 |
| | (83) | | (5) | | | (12) | | (<1) | | | | | | |
| 1987 | 1,552 | 86 | 104 | 1 | 204 | 101 | — | 5 | 2,053 | 106 | 102 | 3 | 9 | 2,283 |
| | (76) | | (9) | | | (15) | | (<1) | | | | | | |
| 1988 | 1,070 | 86 | 93 | 1 | 149 | 66 | 2 | 12 | 1,479 | 55 | 108 | 12 | 5 | 1,659 |
| | (72) | | (12) | | | (15) | | (1) | | | | | | |
| 1989 | 1,120 | 111 | 120 | 1 | 156 | 42 | — | 13 | 1,563 | 40 | 87 | 25 | 3 | 1,718 |
| | (72) | | (15) | | | (13) | | (1) | | | | | | |
| 1990 | 1,438 | 181 | 195 | 1 | 169 | 42 | 1 | 29 | 2,056 | 92 | 46 | 11 | 6 | 2,211 |
| | (70) | | (18) | | | (11) | | (1) | | | | | | |
| 1991 | 1,539 | 262 | 277 | 4 | 155 | 60 | — | 23 | 2,320 | 26 | 62 | 31 | 1 | 2,440 |
| | (66) | | (23) | | | (9) | | (1) | | | | | | |
| [3]1992 | 256 | 56 | 63 | 2 | 29 | 5 | — | 1 | 412 | 6 | 21 | 2 | 1 | 442 |
| | (62) | | (29) | | | (8) | | (<1) | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 9,983 | 841 | 913 | 15 | 1,082 | 405 | 5 | 94 | 13,338 | 1,335 | 679 | 107 | 42 | 15,501 |
| | (75) | | (13) | | | (11) | | (1) | | | | | | |

[1] Includes 199 male drug users who had sex with other men.
[2] Includes 239 children aged 14 years or less.
[3] 1992 1st quarter.

### Miss Jennifer Bennett

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she proposes to reply to the letter sent to her by the Director of the Matthew Trust, dated 20 May, regarding the case of Miss Jennifer Bennett.

**Mr. Sackville:** I have replied today to the Matthew Trust.

### International Peto Institute

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column 677, if she will specify the component parts of the International Peto Institute proposed development in Budapest, which are either under construction or completed and occupied as a result of the initial payment of £1,750,000 by Her Majesty's Government to the Hungarian Government.

**Mr. Yeo:** No construction work is yet under way. Our agreement with the Hungarian Government and the Peto Foundation provided for one initial payment at this stage, with the remainder dependent on construction progress.

### Juvenile Delinquents (Secure Places)

**Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many secure places there are in *(a)* England and *(b)* Yorkshire for juvenile delinquents.

**Mr. Yeo:** On 29 June 1992 there were 292 places in local authority secure units in England, of which 36 were in Yorkshire and Humberside. These units form a network to which all local authorities have access. They are not designed solely for juvenile delinquents; they may accommodate any child who is being looked after by a local authority and who needs a secure placement.

In addition, the youth treatment service runs two youth treatment centres (YTCs)—Glenthorne in Birmingham and St. Charles in Essex. These provide, between them, up to 70 places for disturbed young people. Again, not all these young people have committed an offence.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Savings

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average personal savings rate per adult in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Nelson:** The generally accepted measure of the average rate of saving by individuals in the United Kingdom is the saving ratio, which measures the proportion of personal disposable income not spent on purchases of consumer goods and services. The latest annual estimates of the saving ratio are published in quarterly articles on United Kingdom national accounts in *Economic Trends*, which is available from the Library. The most recent article, giving figures back to 1985, appeared in the issue for April 1992. Figures for earlier periods are available on the CSO database, series AIIM, which can also be accessed through the Library.

Separate ratios for juveniles and adults are not available.

### Overseas Assets

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, on the same basis as for the figures recorded in paragraph 3.47 of the Red Book, he will give the United Kingdom's estimated net overseas asset holdings in constant prices for each of the last six years; and what assessment he has made of the reasons for any fluctuations in their net value.

**Mr. Nelson:** The table shows the level of the United Kingdom's identified net external assets at recorded values

and adjusted by the implied GDP deflator. The recorded values, as in column (a), are those quoted in the Red Book, paragraph 3.47, which updated the latest full estimates in the 1991 CSO Pink Book, and reflect market values for many assets and book values for direct investment. The recorded values of net assets can change for a number of reasons, including United Kingdom residents' investment overseas and overseas residents' investment in the United Kingdom, variations in asset prices both in the United Kingdom and abroad, exchange rate movements, and other valuation changes, eg write-offs.

*Table 1—Net overseas assets (£ billion)*

| Year | Level of identified net overseas assets (at year end) (a) | (b) |
|---|---|---|
| 1986 | 104 | 101 |
| 1987 | 67 | 62 |
| 1988 | 81 | 70 |
| 1989 | 84 | 69 |
| 1990 | 20 | 15 |
| 1991 | 37 | 27 |

(a) Recorded values.
(b) Recorded values adjusted by changes in implied GDP deflator since 1985.
*Sources:* CSO, Pink Book 1991, FSBR, *Economic Trends.*

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information requested on agreements with Switzerland and Liechtenstein is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has responsibility for all international treaties. I refer the hon. Member to the reply of 24 June to his question to the Foreign Secretary on the same subject.

### Cigarette Imports

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss to the Exchequer of increased imports of cheap cigarettes arising from his agreement to a 57 per cent. minimum excise level at the ECOFIN Council on 24 June 1991.

**Sir John Cope:** I do not expect the 24 June 1991 ECOFIN Council agreement on a 57 per cent. minimum excise level on cigarettes to lead to loss to the Exchequer since it does not require the UK to change the level or structure of its excise duties on cigarettes.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information requested in respect of grades 1 to 7 is shown in the table. The proportion of Treasury staff who are women is 43 per cent. Figures reflect the staff in post position as at 23 June 1992.

| Women | | |
|---|---|---|
| Grade | Number | Per cent. |
| 1A | — | — |
| 2 | 1 | 17 |
| 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 4 | — | — |
| 5 | 8 | 11 |
| 6 | 1 | 3 |
| 7 | 51 | 20 |

### Securities and Investments Board

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received, and from whom, on whether the Securities and Investments Board should remain a direct regulator under the Financial Services Act 1986.

**Mr. Nelson:** Responsibility for the regulation of financial services passed to me on 7 June 1992. I have received a number of representations on this subject.

### Government Contracts

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance has been given to Government Departments to ensure that all government contracts require suppliers to pay their sub-contractors promptly.

**Mr. Nelson:** Guidance was issued on 14 April to all Government Departments and executive agencies. For all contract award procedures initiated after that date, all Government contracts are to contain a clause requiring the supplier or contractor to pay subcontractors promptly. In the absence of normal practice to the contrary for that type of contract, or other special circumstances, the commitment should be to pay the subcontractor within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice or similar demand for payment as defined by the contract.

### Stamp Duty

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since 2 June about extending the moratorium on stamp duty.

**Mr. Nelson:** Since I confirmed on 2 June that the temporary increase in the stamp duty threshold would not be extended beyond 19 August, we have received a number of representations for the duration of the moratorium to be reconsidered. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear at the outset that this was a temporary measure for eight months only, and we have no plans to reopen the matter.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will expand the figures in his answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) of 22 June, *Official Report*, col 4, for those with incomes *(a)* £50,000 to £70,000 per year, *(b)* £70,000 to £80,000 per year and *(c)* over £80,000 per year.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The additional information is as follows:

*Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 regime*

| *Range of individuals income in 1992-93* £ | *Total reduction* £ million | *Average Reduction* £ per annum |
|---|---|---|
| 50,000—70,000 | 2,300 | 8,200 |
| 70,000—80,000 | 800 | 14,000 |
| Over £80,000 | 7,200 | 46,000 |

[1] Individuals liable to income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

## Financial Regulation

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now use his powers under section 115 of the Financial Services Act 1986 to take financial regulatory responsibility back into the Government's hands.

**Mr. Nelson:** No.

## Works of Art

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the tax relief scheme whereby inheritors of works of art are given exemption from inheritance tax and capital transfer tax provided that public access is given.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The annual cost of conditional exemption from inheritance tax and capital transfer tax of works of art is estimated to have averaged about £70 million over the period 1983-84 to 1991-92. There are sometimes significant fluctuations in the estimated cost from year to year.

## Landowners (Tax Exemption)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 2, if he will list for each county in England, Scotland or Wales the number of landowners and estates that have benefited under the tax procedures by which tax liability is reduced on condition that there is an undertaking to manage and protect the land from development and allow reasonable public access.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* There have been 117 designations of land for conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax in England and Wales. In addition, there have been 107 designations of historic buildings in England and Wales, some of which will have extended to surrounding land. Some designations of historic buildings have been for the purposes of the tax exemptions for maintenance funds rather than for exemption of the buildings themselves.

A detailed breakdown by county is not readily available. In addition, the normal rules of taxpayer confidentiality would prevent the disclosure of figures for counties with a very small number of designations.

Details of the number of designations for land and buildings in Scotland were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 22 June at column 2.

## Gross Domestic Product

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* each standard region and *(c)* each Welsh county, the industrial distribution of gross domestic product in percentage terms for each category for the years *(a)* 1984, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991, respectively.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The table gives the available information on GDP by industry division. Data for 1991 are not yet available and there is no breakdown of GDP for counties.

*Gross domestic product by industry group: Percentages of regions' totals By 1989*

| | *North* | *Yorkshire and Humberside* | *East Midlands* | *East Anglia* | *Greater London* | *Rest of South East* | *South West* | *West Midlands* | *North West* | *Wales* | *Scotland* | *Northern Ireland* | *United Kingdom* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Energy and water supply | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Manufacturing | 29 | 27 | 30 | 23 | 14 | 20 | 21 | 32 | 30 | 28 | 22 | 18 | 23 |
| Minerals, metals and chemicals | 10 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Metal goods, engineering and vehicles | 9 | 9 | 11 | 9 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 18 | 13 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 10 |
| Other manufacturing | 9 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 9 |
| Construction | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Distribution, hotels and catering: repairs | 13 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 15 |
| Transport, communication | 6 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| Financial and business services less adjustment for financial services | 7 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 23 | 17 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 13 |
| Ownership of dwellings | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Public administration and defence | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 7 |
| Education and health | 11 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 10 |
| Other services | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Gross domestic product by industry group: Percentages of regions' totals in 1990*

| | *North* | *Yorkshire and Humberside* | *East Midlands* | *East Anglia* | *Greater London* | *Rest of South East* | *South West* | *West Midlands* | *North West* | *Wales* | *Scotland* | *Northern Ireland* | *United Kingdom* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Energy and water supply | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Manufacturing | 28 | 26 | 29 | 22 | 13 | 20 | 20 | 31 | 29 | 27 | 22 | 18 | 23 |

| | North | Yorkshire and Humberside | East Midlands | East Anglia | Greater London | Rest of South East | South West | West Midlands | North West | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland | United Kingdom |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minerals, metals and chemicals | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Metal goods, engineering and vehicles | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Other manufacturing | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| Construction | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 |
| Distribution, hotels and catering: repairs | 13 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 15 |
| Transport, communication | 7 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 |
| Financial and business services less adjustment for financial services | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 23 | 17 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 13 |
| Ownership of dwellings | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Public administration and defence | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 14 | 7 |
| Education and health | 11 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 10 |
| Other services | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Notes:
1. The 1990 results are provisional, and the breakdown is not yet available within manufacturing.
2. The total excludes the gross domestic product for the Continental shelf and the statistical discrepancy.

*Gross domestic product by industry group:*
*Percentages of regions' totals*
*At 1984*

| | North | Yorkshire and Humberside | East Midlands | East Anglia | Greater London | Rest of South East | South West | West Midlands | North West | Wales | Scotland | Northern Ireland | United Kingdom |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 2 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 |
| Energy and water supply | 7 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| Manufacturing | 31 | 28 | 32 | 26 | 16 | 24 | 24 | 35 | 32 | 26 | 24 | 20 | 26 |
| Minerals, metals and chemicals | 11 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Metal goods, engineering and vehicles | 11 | 9 | 11 | 9 | 7 | 13 | 12 | 20 | 12 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 11 |
| Other manufacturing | 8 | 12 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 8 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Construction | 6 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Distribution, hotels and catering: repairs | 12 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| Transport, communication | 6 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 8 |
| Financial and business services less adjustment for financial services | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 15 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 9 |
| Ownership of dwellings | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Public administration and defence | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 15 | 8 |
| Education and health | 11 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 9 |
| Other services | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each English and Welsh county and Scottish region the estimated gross domestic product per head of population as a percentage of the United Kingdom average.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* These data have been published in the article "Regional Accounts 1990, Part 1" in the November 1991 issue of *Economic Trends*, copies of which are available in the Library.

### Bank of Credit and Commerce International

**Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the Ministers and former Ministers who have given evidence to the Bingham inquiry on BCCI.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The Prime Minister assured the House on 22 July 1991 *Official Report*, at column *759* that all Ministers and officials would co-operate fully with Lord Justice Bingham's inquiry, and we have done so. A number of Ministers and former Ministers have given evidence. The inquiry has taken evidence in private, and it has not been the inquiry's practice to announce who has given evidence.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Charter Mark

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the advertising and administrative costs of the Charter Mark trophy design competition.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The final costs are not yet available, but are likely to be in the region of £170,000 (including VAT).

### Private-sector Contractors

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether private-sector contractors who undertake civil service work will remain under the scrutiny presently exercisable by Parliament; and whether the public will have recourse to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in cases of maladministration by private sector contractors carrying out work done previously by Government Departments.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Where civil service work is contracted out following a market testing exercise, the accountability of Ministers to Parliament remains unchanged. The jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is unaffected.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether private-sector contractors undertaking civil service work will have to conform to established civil service practice regarding the confidentiality of information that may come into their possession; whether employees of private firms employed on such contracts will have to sign the Official Secrets Acts 1989; and what will be the position of foreign national employees of such firms employed on such contracts.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Contractors working for government departments are, as appropriate, subject to contract conditions which require the protection of classified information to a standard equivalent to that which applies within departments generally. Contractors' employees, including any who are foreign nationals, who may have access to classified information, are security cleared to the level appropriate to the information concerned. Such employees who have access to information to which the Official Secrets Act 1989 applies receive notice that the Act applies to them, and are normally required to sign declarations acknowledging their obligations under it.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what degree of openness there will be regarding any future contracting out to the private sector of civil service work; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It has been this Government's established practice to ensure non-discrimination and fair competition in public procurement, as set out in administrative circulars issued by the central unit on purchasing in HM Treasury. From December last year, EC rules, which in large part replicate United Kingdom best practice, were written into the United Kingdom legislation which will implement a further EC Directive to ensure compliance throughout the EC.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Telephone Directories

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, for what reasons the House of Commons telephone directories have not yet been updated to show the names and numbers of the Ministers currently in office; and when he expects the information to be updated.

**Mr. Beith:** Responsibility for the production of the House of Commons telephone directory lies with the Serjeant at Arms. After a general election it is necessary to formulate completely new sections of the directory covering hon. Members and their staff and including ministerial appointments. In the interests of accuracy, it is not possible to produce new sections of the directory until the allocation of accommodation and telephone lines has been virtually completed. The information is now being printed and completed directories will be issued by 13 July.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Water Charges (Summonses)

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will review the level of the bulk issue fee for summonses for water charges; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** No fee is charged specifically for the bulk issue of summonses through the summons production centre. The fees for issuing a summons are prescribed in the County Court Fees Order 1982, as amended. All fees, including those charged in the county courts, are reviewed on a regular basis.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Cardiac Surgery

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the impact of the proposed acute bed closures in the Eastern health board area on reducing the waiting list for cardiac surgery which is a regional speciality.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Eastern health and social services board's proposals for acute bed closures, set out in its recently published consultative document, are framed on the premise that the same or even greater numbers of patients can be treated in fewer beds by taking advantage of the latest developments in medical technology, securing greater efficiency in the use of beds and making greater use of day and out-patient procedures. The board's proposals are not therefore expected to impact adversely on the provision of cardiac surgery.

### Fishing

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to review the one-net rule in respect of the fishing industry which was introduced on 1 June.

**Mr. Hanley:** The one-net rule forms part of a package of measures to improve conservation of fish stocks. The matter is being kept under review.

### Harbour Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statutory protection exists for constables of the Larne harbour police from unfair dismissal; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trade union.

**Mr. Atkins:** Persons employed in police service, or in any other capacity by virtue of which they have the powers or privilege of a constable, are excluded from the unfair dismissal legislation. Accordingly, constables of the Larne harbour police have no statutory protection from unfair dismissal. They are not represented by a statutory police federation. There are however no statutory restrictions on their entitlement to join a trade union and most the Larne Harbour police are members of the General Municipal Boilermakers and Allied Trade Union.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statutory protection exists for

constables of Belfast harbour police from unfair dismissal; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trade union.

**Mr. Atkins:** Persons employed in police service, or in any other capacity by virtue of which they have the powers or privileges of a constable, are excluded from the unfair dismissal legislation. Accordingly, constables of the Belfast harbour police have no statutory protection from unfair dismissal. There are no statutory restrictions on their entitlement to join a trade union and they are represented by the Belfast harbour police representative body rather than by a statutory police federation.

### Maghaberry Prison

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of strip searches made on female prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry monthly since July 1991; what was the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; what prison contraband smuggled items or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for each search.

**Mr. Mates:** Details of the number of, and reasons for, searches of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry from July 1991 to May 1992 are set out below.

No prohibited articles were found during these searches. On 2 March 1992, 22 prisoners refused to co-operate with a full search. Of these prisoners, 21 had to be restrained while the search was being conducted.

| *Number of searches* | *July 1991* | *August 1991* | *September 1991* | *October 1991* | *November 1991* | *December 1991* | *January 1992* | *February 1992* | *March 1992* | *April 1992* | *May 1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total number of searches carried out | 34 | 32 | 37 | 36 | 31 | 41 | 19 | 18 | 66 | 31 | 31 |
| Total number of inmates searched | 24 | 21 | 29 | 26 | 19 | 30 | 14 | 17 | 51 | 23 | 24 |
| Number of prisoners searched once | 17 | 11 | 22 | 16 | 12 | 21 | 9 | 16 | 42 | 15 | 17 |
| Number of prisoners searched twice | 6 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 7 |
| Number of prisoners searched more than twice | 1 | 1 | 1 | nil | 1 | 1 | nil | nil | 6 | nil | nil |
| *Reason for search* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| First admission on remand/ awaiting trial | 11 | 7 | 12 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 8 |
| First admission on sentence/ final discharge | 8 | 12 | 9 | 20 | 9 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 13 | 16 |
| Attending remand court | nil | nil | nil | nil | 1 | nil | nil | nil | 4 | nil | nil |
| Attending trial | nil | nil | nil | nil | 1 | 1 | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Inter prison visit | 4 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Prison visit | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Pre-release home leave | 6 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 2 | nil | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| Compassionate home leave | 4 | nil | nil | nil | nil | 1 | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Visits to outside hospital | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Returning from bail application | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | 2 | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Attendance at court for bail | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Fines paid | nil | nil | nil | 2 | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | 1 | nil |
| Working out scheme | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| Bail granted | 1 | 1 | nil | nil | 2 | 3 | nil | nil | 1 | nil | nil |
| Suspected security compromise | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | 34 | nil | nil |

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were charged with disciplinary offences, and which offences, following disturbances at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry on 2 March.

**Mr. Mates:** On 2 March 1992 a full search of the female section of Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry was carried out.

As a consequence of their refusal to co-operate in full searching, 22 prisoners were charged with disobeying a lawful order. Ten of these prisoners were also charged with offending against security and good order of the prison; of these, five were further charged with commiting an assault.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Endangered Species

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to design national recovery plans for all threatened species within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Maclean:** The "Recovery" scheme to assist specific native plants and animals in danger of extinction was launched by English Nature in April 1991 and forms an integral part of my Department's Action for the Countryside initiative. Fourteen species were included in the scheme in 1991-92 and English Nature plans to increase this to 21 in 1992-93.

### Habitat Conservation

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps are being taken by his Department to conserve the habitats of crop pollinators and the natural enemies of pests;

(2) what progress is being made by his Department in *(a)* promoting remaining natural ecosystems, *(b)* the restoration of degraded ecosystems and *(c)* the maintenance of as large an area as possible of modified ecosystems to support a diversity of sustainable uses.

**Mr. Maclean:** We remain committed to the conservation of wildlife habitats. In partnership with the country conservation bodies and other Government Departments we have introduced a series of measures designed to ensure the good management of important habitats. These

include countryside stewardship, the wildlife enhancement scheme, environmentally sensitive areas and agreements with MOD, Forestry Commission and the National Trust.

## Inner City Task Forces

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will provide a table of expenditure showing the cost of running each inner city task force for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices;

(2) if he will provide a table of expenditure on each inner city task force from his Department for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The costs of running the inner city task forces and the overall expenditure of each for the period from 1989-90 to 1991-92 is set out in the following tables:

*Table A: Running Costs*

| *Task Force* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birmingham East | 86,480 | 106,227 | 129,724 |
| Handsworth | 2,423 | 622 | — |
| Bradford | 49,839 | 132,629 | 131,947 |
| Bristol | 134,122 | 111,646 | 94,396 |
| Coventry | 71,293 | 82,747 | 89,800 |
| Derby | — | 49,123 | 122,345 |
| Doncaster | 124,007 | 50,497 | — |
| Hartlepool | 102,446 | 94,419 | 60,733 |
| Hull | — | — | 31,362 |
| Leeds | 111,469 | 143,977 | 90,225 |
| Leicester | 37,286 | 2,435 | — |
| Liverpool | 68,348 | 113,275 | 126,871 |
| London Deptford | 39,317 | 109,227 | 102,470 |
| Hackney | — | — | 12,685 |
| North Peckham | 122,762 | 177,092 | 185,166 |
| Spitalfields | 137,476 | 150,046 | 133,400 |
| West London | 131,310 | 144,690 | 153,189 |
| Manchester | 117,124 | 134,939 | 143,844 |
| Middlesbrough | 76,021 | 79,141 | 110,586 |
| Nottingham | 122,484 | 133,138 | 130,645 |
| Preston | 57,917 | 29 | — |
| Rochdale | 92,272 | 48,533 | — |
| South Tyneside | — | — | 16,302 |
| Wirral | — | 46,720 | 126,858 |
| Wolverhampton | 39,381 | — | — |

All figures inclusive of capital costs of office machinery, furniture and supplies.
1991-92 figures include hard charges for DTI services.

*Table B: Expenditure*

| *Task force* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Birmingham East | 1,469,374 | 1,131,041 | 1,193,486 |
| Handsworth | 190,528 | 622 | — |
| Bradford | 449,808 | 2,069,998 | 1,170,249 |
| Bristol | 754,583 | 2,120,795 | 1,127,725 |
| Coventry | 1,540,512 | 1,015,544 | 1,785,869 |
| Derby | — | 302,461 | 1,268,963 |
| Doncaster | 1,460,333 | 628,601 | — |
| Hartlepool | 1,211,223 | 1,415,387 | 891,289 |
| Hull | — | — | 291,932 |
| Leeds | 1,389,818 | 1,106,183 | 651,933 |
| Leicester | 1,037,353 | 32,068 | — |
| Liverpool | 659,046 | 1,628,721 | 1,942,868 |
| London Deptford | 245,025 | 1,780,225 | 1,509,634 |
| Hackney | — | — | 785,125 |
| North Peckham | 1,006,905 | 1,435,620 | 2,151,671 |
| Spitalfields | 883,210 | 974,605 | 2,000,499 |
| West London | 594,236 | 1,439,378 | 1,759,726 |
| Manchester | 2,440,593 | 2,206,220 | 1,467,424 |
| Middlesbrough | 787,335 | 1,255,331 | 1,745,020 |
| Nottingham | 920,225 | 1,176,292 | 1,412,042 |
| Preston | 554,449 | 28,606 | — |
| Rochdale | 842,665 | 715,362 | 52,745 |
| South Tyneside | — | — | 94,003 |
| Wirral | — | 597,061 | 1,059,078 |
| Wolverhampton | 1,082,064 | 57,291 | — |

Running costs apportioned to individual task forces before the financial year 1989-90 are not readily available. Figures are not available on a 1987-88 price basis. To provide this would incur disproportionate costs.

On 1 June 1992 financial responsibility for the task forces was transferred to my Department from the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will reach a decision on allocating RECHAR funds to North Warwickshire borough; and how that will affect the standard spending assessment of the borough council.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The northern Warwickshire RECHAR integrated development programme was approved by the European Commission on 26 February 1992. The decision on the allocation of RECHAR funds to north Warwickshire borough will not affect the council's SSA for 1992-93 or 1993-94.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many RECHAR projects have been agreed by the Government since 17 February 1991.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** None.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decisions were reached by the RECHAR European regional development fund co-ordinating committee in respect of North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedford borough projects on 11 June.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** There were no applications for ERDF grant for consideration at the meeting.

## Commonhold

**Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce commonhold legislation before 16 July.

**Sir George Young:** No. We propose to introduce legislation after the recess to give effect to leasehold enfranchisement of flats and higher rateable value houses. Commonhold tenure is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor: it will not be the subject of legislation in the present session.

## Urban Programme

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make reductions in levels of urban programme funding for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** Decisions on future funding levels for the urban programme will be taken in November, following the outcome of the current public expenditure round.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Howard:** The latest available information on numbers of women in my Department is as follows:

| *Grade* | *Numbers* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 3 | 43 |
| 3 | 5 | 14 |
| 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 24 | 15 |
| 6 | 20 | 7 |
| 7 | 133 | 16 |
| Total | 186 | 14 |
| All grades | 2,809 | 42 |

These figures relate to staff in post in DOE and its agencies.

## Mersey Estuary

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what species of wildfowl and wading birds the Mersey estuary is *(a)* nationally important and *(b)* internationally important.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Mersey estuary is internationally important for its wintering population of Teal, Pintail, Shelduck, Redshank and Dunlin, and nationally important for its wintering populations of Grey Plover, Wigeon and Curlew.

Proportions of relevant international and national populations of waterfowl are as follows (figures are for the five year peak mean, for the period 1986-87 to 1990-91):

| *Species* | *Winter peak mean* | *Percentage of international population* | *Percentage of British population* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teal | 10,679 | 2·6 | 10·6 |
| Grey Plover | 710 | 0·4 | 3·3 |
| Wigeon | 6,644 | 0·8 | 2·6 |
| Pintail | 5,907 | 8·4 | 23·6 |
| Curlew | 1,443 | 0·4 | 1·5 |
| Redshank | 3,824 | 3·5 | 5·0 |
| Shelduck | 3,392 | 1·3 | 4·5 |
| Dunlin | 23,928 | 1·7 | 5·5 |

## Water Metering

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to mitigate the effect of the introduction of a metering system of water on those people with health problems who require a greater intake of water;

(2) what assessment he has made of how a switch from calculation by rateable value to a metering system for water will affect families of lower than average income in comparison with other domestic users.

**Mr. Maclean:** These issues have been addressed in a survey of the impact of water metering commissioned jointly with the Office of Water Services. The final report from the contractor is expected shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library. We shall consider what action is appropriate in the light of the report.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what pilot schemes have been used to evaluate the efficiency of water meters; how long did they run; and how many homes were involved.

**Mr. Maclean:** The performance of water meters has been monitored over a three-year period in the national water metering trials. The trials involved around 57,000 domestic properties. Randomly selected meters have been periodically removed in all the trials in order to analyse their performance and accuracy.

## Sheep Dips

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the rules for the disposal of organophosphorus sheep dips; and what the average costs of incineration are for farmers.

**Mr. Maclean:** As an agricultural waste, disposal of organophosphorus sheep dip is controlled by means of statutory codes of practice. Under section 97 of the Water Resources Act (1991) the code of good agricultural practice for the protection of water gives advice to farmers on the safe disposal of spent dip. MAFF have published a guidance note on the safe handling and disposal of sheep dips. The code and guidance note advise farmers on the type, siting and use of dipping baths and on the preferred methods of disposal. While soakaways are no longer considered suitable, dilution and spreading to sacrificial land or disposal via an approved waste disposal contractor are recommended. Spent dip is not suitable for incineration. Commercial information on the costs of incineration are not collated or held centrally and could be obtained only at excessive cost.

## Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively, and overrall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Howard:** The Department employs 64 staff who are known to be registered and a further 34 who are known to have a disability without being registered. This represents some 1·5 per cent. of the total non-industrial workforce.

These figures include one grade 6 and three grade 7s who are disabled but not registered.

## Carbon Dioxide

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

**Mr. Maclean:** Continuous measurements of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have been made in remote locations since the International Geophysical Year, 1957. The global average concentration estimated from these measurements has increased steadily every year. In its 1992 science supplementary report the intergovernmental panel on climate change estimated the present global average concentration of carbon dioxide to be 355 parts per million by volume.

## Local Government Boundaries

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the recommendations of the local government boundary commission in respect of London boroughs and his *(a)* acceptance or *(b)* non-acceptance of those recommendations.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The local government boundary commission publishes its recommendations in the form of final reports to the Secretary of State. Twenty-two London borough reports have been published so far. The commission is expected to submit its final reports on the remainder by the end of October 1992. The Secretary of State has issued his decisions on three of the reports and has accepted all but one of the recommendations.

## Starlings (Pâté)

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the export of starlings to France for the manufacture of pâté.

**Mr. Maclean:** The export of whole dead starlings in feather to France would need to be covered by an export permit issued by my Department under the provisions of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. While we treat each application on its individual merits, commercial trade would not normally be allowed since this might encourage the killing of these birds for profit rather than as pests.

The export of plucked birds is not controlled under the 1976 Act, and exports could take place without reference to my Department.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the disparity between the standard spending assessment for interest receipts for Lancashire 1992-93 and the council's budget estimate.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The standard spending assessment element for interest receipts is calculated on the basis that the ability to generate such receipts is proportional to an authority's turnover or expenditure (as measured by total SSA, excluding the allowance for capital financing). For 1992-93 local decisions will determine the extent to which actual receipts differ from the SSA allowance.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will respond to the representations made by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on the need for reimbursement of local authorities on the costs incurred in business rate resiting as a result of the changes announced in the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood:** The Department wrote to the association on 25 June. We have agreed a basic allowance of 18 pence for postage costs and 70 pence for preparation of adjustment notices (but with an additional cost weighting for areas with high staff costs). In addition, we have agreed to meet authorities' reasonable computer software costs, subject to audit.

## Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Moray constituency qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many homes have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,245 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the reasons for, and the contents of, the reduction of total standard spending from the service working groups' calculation of £44 billion to £41·8 billion for 1992-93.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The level of total standard spending reflects a range of factors including pressures on local government spending, the scope for savings, the level of central and local taxation and what the country as a whole can afford. It represents the Government's overall judgment and as such is not comparable in detail with the recommendations of the service working groups.

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the standard spending assessment for social services in Lancashire in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93, and what is the national average in each of those years.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is shown in the table.

*Personal social services standard spending assessments*

| | *Lancashire* | *England* |
|---|---|---|
| PSS SSA in £ million | | |
| 1990-91 | 92·854 | 3,591 |
| 1991-92 | 113·860 | 4,417 |
| 1992-93 | 120·306 | 4,734 |
| PSS SSA in £ per adult | | |
| 1990-91 | 89 | 101 |
| 1991-92 | 109 | 124 |
| 1992-93 | 117 | 134 |

## Planning Applications

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any assessment of the effectiveness of the way in which parish councils are receiving information about the nature and details of planning applications.

**Mr. Baldry:** No assessment has been made. Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 parish councils

have the right to be notified about all planning applications within their boundary. Paragraph 8 of schedule 1 will be amended to ensure that those parish councils wishing to be notified about planning applications will also be notified about alterations to applications.

### Care Homes

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons the number of places in private residential homes is included in the standard spending assessment formula for elderly residential social services; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The standard spending assessment element for residential social services for the elderly includes an indicator (with a negative weight) based on the numbers of residents in independent, registered residential homes to take some account of the fact that private and voluntary provision has become an increasingly important alternative to local authority supported care in some areas. Where residents receive extra support from DSS benefits this represents a cost saving to the local authority.

### Urban Regeneration Agency

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the urban regeneration agency to be established; whether its terms of reference will include Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; if he will advertise openly the jobs of chairmen; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Subject to the passage of legislation, it is likely that the urban regeneration agency will be established in the second half of 1993. Its remit will be restricted to England and Mr. Peter Walker has already agreed to be the first chairman.

### Park Police

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory protection exists for constables of the City of Westminster parks police and borough of Wandsworth parks police from unfair dismissal; what statutory restrictions exist on their taking industrial action; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trades union.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The conditions of service of the Westminster and Wandsworth parks police are matters for the authorities concerned, in their role as employers.

### Environmental Assessments

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for extending the requirements for environmental assessment to projects not already covered.

**Sir George Young:** Section 71A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted by section 15 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, enables the Secretary of State to make regulations adding to the categories of project subject to planning control which may require environmental assessment. The Government have promised to consult those concerned before making regulations.

My Department is today issuing a consultation paper inviting comments on proposals to amend the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 to add the following categories: trout farms, water treatment plants, wind generators, motorway and similar service areas, coast protection works and golf courses. The effect would be to require environmental assessment where a project of this type was likely to have significant environmental effects. The paper also proposes adding privately financed toll roads to Schedule 1 to the Regulations, the effect of which would be to require environmental assessment for all projects of this kind; and various minor amendments to the existing procedures. The Welsh Office is undertaking a similar consultation exercise in Wales.

A copy of the paper is being placed in the Library.

### Ordnance Survey

**Mrs. Chaplin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance targets have been set for the Ordnance Survey executive agency in the year 1992-93.

**Mr. Howard:** The following performance targets have been set for Ordnance Survey in 1992-93:

1. Recover 70 per cent. of the total cost incurred by the agency.
2. Survey and map at the basic scales 846,000 units of change.
3. Increase by 34,700 the number of basic scale maps available in digital form.
4. Publish on microfilm within three months each large-scale map reaching the criteria and specification for reproduction.
5. Despatch within seven working days (including the day the order is received) 90 per cent. of orders for 1:50 000 scale folded maps.

### Specific Action for Vigorous Energy Efficiency Programme

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to meet the proposals contained in the European Community's SAVE programme; and to what extent the programme is behind schedule.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 13 May 1992]:* The United Kingdom fully supports the objectives of the SAVE programme and is active on the SAVE Consultative Committee, where we continue to reinforce the Commission's efforts to stimulate energy efficiency through pilot projects and information activities. Agreement has been reached on internal market legislation for efficiency standards of new central heating boilers and for mandatory energy labelling of domestic appliances. The Commission has now proposed a SAVE Directive setting out areas not related to traded goods in which member states should achieve progress in energy efficiency, and I welcome their recognition that EC wide legislation is not necessarily the best way to encourage energy efficiency in areas which do not affect the internal market. This new proposal replaces the timetable contained in the original SAVE Communication.

## Abattoirs

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regulations which control effluents discharged from abattoirs; which bodies are responsible for monitoring such effluents; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Discharges of trade effluent, including those from abattoirs, are subject to control under the Water Industry and Water Resources Acts 1991. Discharges to sewer require the consent of the relevant water service company and those to a watercourse require the consent of the National Rivers Authority. It is the responsibility of the consenting authority in each case to carry out associated monitoring.

## Business Rate

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect he expects his measures to alleviate the uniform business rate to have on *(a)* retail, *(b)* manufacturing, *(c)* service and *(d)* other businesses in East Anglia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* We estimate that 31,000 businesses in East Anglia will benefit from the provisions of the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992, to the tune of about £14 million during 1992-93. The table shows our estimate of the spread of the savings across different business sectors in East Anglia.

| *Business sectors* | *Number of businesses (000s)* | *Aggregate savings (£m)* |
|---|---|---|
| Retail | 11 | 3 |
| Offices | 3 | 1 |
| Manufacturing | 6 | 5 |
| Other | 11 | 5 |
| Total | 31 | 14 |

In addition, businesses in East Anglia will benefit from the change allowing property to retain any transitional relief if it changes hands after 10 March this year.

## Dog Mess

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy now to seek a legislative opportunity to have dog mess classified as litter; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Classifying dog mess as litter would not permit prosecution of owners who allowed their dogs to foul. Local authorities already have the ability to make byelaws in respect of dog fouling and many authorities have taken such powers. However, we are considering whether further legislation on the subject of dog fouling would be appropriate.

## Owner-occupiers

**Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number and percentage of all households accounted for by owner-occupiers in the United Kingdom; and what comparable information he has for other EC member states.

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Comparable figures for households are not available for EC countries, but the number of dwellings in owner occupation are given in the table.

*Stock of dwellings in owner occupation*

| | *1990* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Thousand dwellings* | *Percentage of all dwellings* |
| Ireland | [2]1,005 | 81 |
| Greece | [3]3,999 | 79 |
| Spain | 16,287 | 76 |
| Luxembourg | [6]138 | 68 |
| United Kingdom | 23,383 | 67 |
| of which England | 19,522 | 69 |
| Italy | [1]23,232 | 67 |
| Belgium | [4]3,997 | 65 |
| Portugal | [1]3,768 | 58 |
| France | 26,237 | [2]54 |
| Denmark | [1]2,353 | 51 |
| Netherlands | [5]5,802 | 45 |
| Germany (West) | [1]26,598 | [3]38 |
| Germany (East) | [1]7,003 | n/a |

[1] 1989
[2] 1988
[3] 1987
[4] 1985
[5] 1981
[6] 1980

## Opencast Mining

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what weight is given to potential respiratory problems in assessing opposition from neighbouring communities to an application for opencast mining.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Minerals Planning Guidance Note 3 advises mineral planning authorities that they will need to have regard to all material considerations when determining planning applications for opencast coal mining. However, I am advised that there is no evidence to suggest that surface mineral working causes any detrimental health effects on local communities.

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's Government will initiate a wide-ranging review on the effects of opencast mining on neighbouring communities.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* No. the current planning guidelines on opencast coal mining are contained in Minerals Planning Guidance Note 3 (MPG 3) published in 1988. They advise mineral planning authorities of the need to have regard to all material considerations when determining applications and to consider in detail the environmental, nature conservation, agricultural, landscape, traffic and other effects of the proposal that are relevant to the planning decision.

## City Challenge

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make reductions in levels of city challenge funding for 1993-94 and 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Redwood** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* City challenge expenditure on pacemakers and round 2 winners will be £82·5 million and £150 million per annum

respectively for five years. There are no plans to reduce these amounts. No decisions on future rounds of city challenge have yet been taken.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* My Department employed Dr. Alan Kemp to assist in the development of its response to the "Competing for Quality" White Paper. Messrs. Donaldson have advised on the preparation of contractual documentation for market testing property management services and have undertaken a subsequent review. Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte are advising on the value for money of alternative arrangements for providing the services offered by the Government car service and the interdepartmental despatch service. Further appointments in support of the market testing programme will be made as required.

### Dittiscombe Equestration Centre

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 17 June, *Official Report,* column *572,* regarding the appeal against the level of business rate by the Dittiscombe equestrian centre, Slapton, if he will bring forward the date of the hearing to 2 August to enable the appeal to be heard within two years from the date of the proposal being received by the Devon valuation tribunal.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Valuation tribunals are independent bodies, and it would not be right for the Department to interfere in the timing of specific cases.

However, I understand that the district valuation office has been negotiating with the agent representing the owner. It may be therefore that this case can be settled earlier without the need for the hearing.

## SCOTLAND

### Homosexuals

**Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many men were sent to prison in each of the last five years for convictions of consensual homosexual activity with men aged over 16 years and under 21 years; how many such prosecutions have taken place in each of the last five years; and how many resulted in sentences of immediate custody.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The specific information requested is not available. What information we have is set out in the table:

*Persons Proceeded Against under section 8(7) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980*

| *Year* | *Persons Proceeded Against* | *Persons Sentenced to Custody* |
|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 53 | 4 |
| 1989 | 42 | 1 |
| 1990 | 74 | 1 |

Section 80(7) offences include homosexual acts with a person under the age of 21 with or without the consent of both parties.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Lang:** The number and percentage of women officers in post in grades 1 to 7—and equivalents—and overall in the Scottish Office and associated departments are shown in the table:

| *Grade (and equivalents)* | *Women* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | — | — |
| 2 | — | — |
| 3 | 3 | 11·5 |
| 4 | 1 | 6·2 |
| 5 | 17 | 12·6 |
| 6 | 36 | 17·1 |
| 7 | 68 | 14·7 |
| Overall | 2,828 | 44·9 |

### Telegraph Poles

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the obligations placed upon British Telecom plc to consult on, or seek permission for, the erection of poles in close proximity to private residences.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** There are no general requirements for British Telecom to consult on, or seek permission for, the erection of poles in such circumstances. This type of development benefits from a general planning permission under class 67 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. However, in conservation areas or national scenic areas, British Telecom must give the planning authority at least eight weeks' notice of its intention to carry out development, except in a case of emergency, when notice must be given as soon as possible after the emergency begins. Under the terms of the licence granted to British Telecom by the Telecommunications Act 1984, the visual amenity of properties in proximity to poles should, where practicable, be protected.

### Child Health

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken, or will be taking, to promote as a priority the plan of action for survival, protection and development of children, agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Harare in 1991 for improving child health in Commonwealth countries in the present decade; what information he has received from other Commonwealth countries in regard to implementing the plan of action; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister on 24 June, *Official Report,* column *219.*

### Midges

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to deal with the problems associated with culicoides impunctalis, the Scottish biting midge; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I have no such plans. The ability of culicoides impunctatus to cause discomfort and disruption is well known, but it is a dominant part of Scottish wildlife and possible measures to control or eradicate the species have to take account of the need to avoid harming the wider environment.

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department sponsors on the Scottish biting midge, culicoides impunctalis; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* The Scottish Office is not sponsoring any such research at present, but I am aware of current research being funded by other bodies, for example at the university of Aberdeen.

## Local Government Reorganisation

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will outline the statutory responsibilities that he proposes shall be placed upon the unitary local authorities following his proposed re organisation of local government in Scotland;

(2) if he will list the non-statutory and permissive powers he proposes shall be made available to the unitary local authorities following his proposed reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* My right hon. Friend intends to issue a second consultation paper on local government reorganisation in the autumn. This will set out illustrative options for the new structure and discuss how services might be delivered under different structures. No decisions about powers or responsibilities will be taken until we have completed our thorough and comprehensive consultation.

## Voluntary Organisations

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the financial effect on voluntary organisations in Scotland of the level of income support for people in private homes.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* No such assessment has been made by my Department. The level of income support for people in voluntary and private sector residential care homes is a matter for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has responsibility. A study of costs in independent residential care homes which included homes in Scotland was undertaken in 1990 for the Department of Social Security. The results of this were taken into account in determining the increases in income support limits from April 1991. Increases in the limits from April 1992 were generally above the rate of inflation.

## Residential Homes

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with local authorities or voluntary organisations about the level of financial support for residents in residential or nursing homes in Scotland.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* No such discussions have taken place. The issue raised by the hon. Member is a matter for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has responsibility.

## Fishing Industry

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of EC funding available to the Scottish Office via EC FEOGA grants to assist the fishing industry in Scotland in the current financial year and the projected figure for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* EC grants are available for investment in ports, fishing vessels, aquaculture and for the marketing and processing of fish products. The amount of that assistance will depend on the success of individual applications.

## Fish Processing

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from the fish-processing industry for temporary derogation from EC proposals on regulations pertaining to the fish-processing industry.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* By June 24 the Scottish Office had received 260 applications for temporary derogations from the structural and equipment requirements of the fishery products directive 91/493/EEC.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish guidelines relating to EC proposals as they affect export licences for fish processors in Scotland.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Directive 91/493/EEC, concerning health rules for the production and placing on the market of fishery products, requires that all such products are given an identification mark to signify that they have been produced in accordance with the directive. The directive applies to trade within the European Community; trade with third countries will continue to be subject to bilateral arrangements. The regulations implementing the directive will be issued for public consultation shortly.

## Skye Bridge

**Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement of his Department's view on the ongoing work being carried out by the Miller Construction Group in the south-west Ross area in advance of his receiving the recommendations of the reporter at the Skye bridge public inquiry.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* We understand that the contractor for Skye Bridge Tolls Ltd. has been making prudent preparations in the event that the go-ahead should be given to the project. In particular, we understand that the contractor has carried out minor operations to determine that the Kishorn dry dock was still operable.

## Wick Airport

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. about a public road which crosses the runway at Wick airport; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* The chairman of Highlands and Islands Airports

Ltd. has recently written to me suggesting that there is a need, on safety grounds, to close an unclassified public road which crosses the main runway at Wick airport, and asking whether the Government have powers to intervene. The matter is under consideration.

### Highlands and Islands Enterprise

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names and emoluments of the members of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* The names of members of Highlands and Islands Enterprise are set out in the table, together with their remuneration.

| | *Salary £* |
|---|---|
| *Chairman* | |
| Sir Robert Cowan | 62,530 |
| *Chief executive (ex-officio member)* | |
| I Robertson | 54,750 |
| *Full-time member* | |
| P. J. Hamilton-Grierson | 57,600 |
| *Part-time members* | |
| Mrs. P. Grant, OBE | 6,570 |
| J. A. D. Harrison, OBE | 6,570 |
| Dr. J. Hunter | 6,570 |
| A. S. MacDonald CBE | 6,570 |
| Mrs. V. MacIver | 6,570 |
| A. F. Morrison | 6,570 |
| J. D. M. Robertson, OBE | 6,570 |
| P. Timms, MBE | 6,570 |
| J. A. MacKay | 6,570 |

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which private consultants have been engaged to prepare Grampian Healthcare to apply for NHS trust status; what is the remit for each of the consultants; what is the total cost of each contract; and what are the funding sources to meet the total cost.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Contracts have been placed with the undermentioned companies to advise the Grampian Healthcare Unit on various aspects related to the development of a NHS trust proposal. The total cost has been estimated at £48,000, funded £33,000 from the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and £15,000 from Grampian health board using moneys specifically allocated for this purpose:

Frontline Consultants Ltd.
Greenhalga and Co. Ltd.
SECTA Consulting Group
PR Consultants (Scotland)
Patricia Hopkins Associates
Format Communication Art

### Health Service Pay Awards

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional funds he has made available to Grampian health board to cover payments made by the board to Mediguard to compensate for nationally agreed pay awards.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* None. The revenue allocation to Grampian health board for the current year is intended to cover all expected expenditure commitments.

### Food Hygiene

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the new Scottish food hygiene regulations; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Formal consultations were held last year on proposals to introduce statutory temperature controls for certain foodstuffs. These were followed by discussions with representatives of trade interests and with local authorites which would be responsible for enforcement. A number of substantial points of practical detail are still being considered. In the meantime, the European Commission has published a draft directive on the hygiene of foodstuffs which deals with all aspects of food hygiene, including temperature controls. Until the terms of the EC directive have been finalised, it will not be practicable to revise the Food Hygiene (Scotland) Regulations.

### Caledonian MacBrayne

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria are applied to those ferry routes operated by Cal-Mac in the highlands and islands which are in receipt of subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Under the terms of the undertaking between my right hon. Friend and Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. deficit subsidy is paid to the company to support certain approved services considered necessary to maintain or improve economic or social conditions in the highlands and islands area. The Government are committed to continuing to provide financial support for essential lifeline services to the islands.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to obtain a breakdown of profits and losses incurred on individual Cal-Mac ferry routes in receipt of subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* No. My right hon. Friend does not consider it justified to require the company to make commercially sensitive information about operating surpluses and deficits incurred on individual routes. The company's annual report and accounts for 1991, presented to Parliament on 27 May 1992, identifying the operating deficits and surpluses realised by the company in respect of groups of services defined by area of operation.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will tabulate the total subsidy to Cal-Mac ferries for 1991-92 giving administration costs, staff salaries, ferry maintenance and direct passenger fare subsidy; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The company's annual report and accounts for the calendar year 1991, which were presented to Parliament on 27 May 1992, contain the information requested in respect of deficit subsidy, staff costs and ferry maintenance costs.

The accounts, prepared in accordance with accounting standards, do not separately identify administration costs. Deficit subsidy is intended to eliminate the overall deficit incurred by the company in operating a network of approved services and is not related to different categories of traffic—for example, passengers.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Southern Africa

**Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether further bilateral aid will be provided to meet the needs of people suffering from the drought in southern Africa; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has today announced a further package of bilateral aid totalling £10 million comprising:

£2·5 million in the form of balance of payments aid for Zimbabwe, to help ease its financial difficulties and enable the Government to import essential food;

£2·5 million for Malawi (for drought related assistance)

£2·5 million for Mozambique (for drought related assistance)

£1·5 million for UNICEF/World Food Programme operations in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia.

£1 million for further technical assistance and support for the activities of British non-governmental organisations aimed at relieving the impact of the drought in the affected countries in the region.

This will bring our total bilateral commitment in response to the drought in southern Africa to some £48 million.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Whaling

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representation he has made to the Japanese authorities in view of the continuing slaughter of minke whales by Japanese fishers.

**Mr. Gummer:** We have made very clear to the Japanese authorities our opposition to lethal means of research into whales. Our resolute opposition will continue at the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow.

### Fishing Vessels

**Mr. Channon:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for imposing the days-at-sea regulations on vessels under 10 m.

**Mr. Curry:** As the recent consultation paper on effort control and decommissioning makes clear, the Government do not propose initially to introduce controls on days-at-sea for vessels of overall length 10 metres and under when restrictive licensing is extended to them in 1993. However, the extension of licensing will facilitate the collection of statistics on the activities of this sector, and in the light of them the Government will be able to consider whether restrictions should be introduced.

### Falkland Islands

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what cases there have been of rabies in the Falkland islands; and if there are any indigenous diseases of animals, fishes or plants in the islands that might threaten the United Kingdom if they were to be imported from the islands.

**Mr. Soames:** We have no record of any rabies cases reported from the Falkland Islands. Sheep on the islands are affected by Brucella ovis which if imported would threaten the United Kingdom, but we are not aware of any similar diseases of fish or plants.

### Royal Botanic Gardens Constabulary

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what statutory protection exists for constables of the Royal Botanic Gardens constabulary, at Kew and Edinburgh, from unfair dismissal; what statutory restrictions exist on their taking industrial action; what statutory police federation exists to represent them; and what statutory restrictions exist on their entitlement to join a trade union.

**Mr. Curry:** In common with all other non-industrial staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the constables are free to take strike action like other Government servants, and are free to join a trade union. At Kew they are not represented by a statutory police federation, but by the National Union of Civil and Public Servants. However, by virtue of section 146(2) and (3) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 the right to claim unfair dismissal at an industrial tribunal does not apply to constables of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, though they may use normal disciplinary procedures operated there.

Responsibility for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, but I understand that in these respects the position of the constables employed at the Edinburgh gardens is essentially the same.

### Intervention Board

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what key performance targets have been set for the Intervention Board; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** In agreement with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland I have set the following targets:

- to process all claims within regulatory or ministerial deadlines;
- to process at least 98 per cent. of claims correctly;
- to achieve 2 per cent. running cost efficiency gains;
- to achieve a 5 per cent. improvement in productivity;
- to keep disallowance to within 0·4 per cent. of EC funds handled;
- to keep expenditure within vote provision and running cost and cash limits; and
- to achieve 5 per cent. new value for money savings in the procurement of goods and services.

### Central Veterinary Laboratory

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance targets he has set for the Central Veterinary Laboratory in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Chief Executive of the Central Veterinary Laboratory has submitted his proposals to me and I have agreed that the laboratory should be set the following strategic performance target for 1992-93.

*financial performance:* full cost recovery for all CVL services;
*efficiency:* an overall efficiency gain of 2·5 per cent. and a reduction of 4 per cent. in representative unit costs;
*service delivery:* 95 per cent. of service work completed on time and 80 per cent. of R & D milestones;
*service quality:* completion of a comprehensive customer survey and achievement of a satisfactory report from a visiting group on an agreed area of the laboratory's work.

These are demanding targets which challenge the laboratory to build on its achievements to date. I commend the chief executive and his staff for the improvements they have already made and wish them well in their endeavours in 1992-93.

### Tyrrell Committee

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent advice he has received from the Tyrrell committee; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** As part of their continuing work to maintain an overview of research into spongiform encephalopathies, the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee have presented to the Secretary of State for Health and me a report which reviews the work now underway in response to earlier independent advice about research priorities.

The committee notes that all studies justifying a high priority have been started, and they are content with the progress of implementing the earlier recommendations overall. The report adds that the committee believes that all the necessary safeguards are in place to minimise further spread of spongiform encephalopathies in animals, and to prevent any risk of transmission to humans.

I am arranging for copies of the report to be placed in the Library of the House and will be arranging for its publication as soon as possible.

### Animal Exports

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many *(a)* lambs, *(b)* sheep, *(c)* pigs, *(d)* calves, *(e)* bulls over six months, *(f)* heifers over six months, *(g)* cull cows and *(h)* horses were exported live from the United Kingdom for purposes other than breeding, fattening or immediate slaughter in each year since 1985;

(2) how many *(a)* horses, *(b)* cattle, *(c)* pigs and *(d)* sheep were exported live from the United Kingdom for breeding in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 24 June, *Official Report*, col. *240*.

### Quarantine

**Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for what reasons quarantine regulations are applied to animals that have been imported from United Kingdom dependencies where the British Government have responsibility and no notifiable diseases are in existence.

**Mr. Soames:** Rabies quarantine is applied as recommended by the Waterhouse committee of inquiry on rabies. Quarantine for other diseases depends upon the assurances which can be provided by the exporting country.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Sporting Facilities

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what financial grants his Department will make available to the northern region for sporting facilities.

**Mr. Mellor:** My Department does not make direct grants towards the provision of sports facilities. The Sports Council receives grant in aid from the Department and its total capital grant aid in the Northern region was £521,303 in 1991-92. Its projected expenditure for 1992-93 is £685,000.

## WALES

### New Age Travellers

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes to take on the recommendations contained in the joint Powys county council/NFU report entitled "Report on Legal Aspects Relating to New Age Travellers", forwarded to his Department in May.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The report is under consideration. The Government have in hand a review of the operation of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal camping. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I hope soon to issue a public consultation paper containing proposals for reform.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The details, based on staff in post figures at 31 March 1992, are given in the following table:

| *Grades* | *Number of registered disabled people* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| 1–5 | — | — |
| 6 | 2 | 2 |
| 7 | — | — |
| DEPARTMENTAL TOTAL | 40 | 1·6 |

*Notes:*
1. Includes equivalent and professional grades.
2. Includes agency and industrial staff. Part-time staff count as one unit.

### Housing Finance

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funding his Department has provided for each of the last five years to *(a)* the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations and *(b)* Shelter Cymru.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested is given in the table:

| | Welsh federation of housing associations[1] £ | Shelter Cymru £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 33,000 | 56,030 |
| 1988-89 | 43,000 | 62,298 |
| 1989-90 | 46,459 | 89,774 |
| 1990-91 | 92,000 | 158,700 |
| 1991-92 | 110,367 | 132,679 |

[1] Welsh Housing Associations Council (WHAC) until 1989.

## NHS Expenditure

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure per head in Wales of *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* general practitioner services, excluding the cost of prescriptions, *(c)* dental services, gross and net of charges and *(d)* general practitioner-prescribed prescriptions, in 1991-92.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information from the 1991-92 annual accounts of health authorities and family health services authorities will be available in the autumn.

## Immunologists

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultant immunologist posts there are in Wales; and what plans he has for developing this specialty.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** There are no consultant immunologist posts at the present time in Wales. However, the possibility of establishing such a post is currently being investigated.

## Ambulance Service

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to introduce a national ambulance service for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The formation of a single, all-Wales ambulance service is one of four options for change which are canvassed in Welsh health circular WHC(92)57, issued by the Welsh Office on 17 June 1992. A copy of that circular has been placed in the Library of the House.

However, it is not the preferred option. For reasons which are explained, it is the alternative of reducing the number of services through multi-district amalgamations which is commended to health authorities.

The circular asks authorities to examine whether such amalgamations will realise improvements in services' efficiency and cost-effectiveness and therefore in the standard of patient care they are able to offer. Their findings are to be reported to the Welsh Office by 30 September 1992.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost per head of the population of the ambulance service in Powys; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Latest available information is for 1990-91 when the net cost per head of population of ambulance services in Powys was £20.

## Health Service Costs

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost in 1991 of running Welsh district health authorities; what were the comparable figures for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The aggregate cost of administering district health authority functions in 1988-89 was £55,916,000. No comparable figure for 1991-92 is yet available.

## Physiotherapists

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that the salary levels of male and female physiotherapists are comparable.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The NHS does not differentiate between male and female physiotherapists. Accordingly, the salaries are already comparable.

## Planning Procedures

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has made any assessment of the effectiveness of the way in which community councils are receiving information about the nature and details of planning applications.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** No, but paragraph 8 of schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is due to be amended to ensure that those community councils who wish to be notified of planning applications will also be notified about alterations to applications.

## Health Service Grading Appeals

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many clinical grading appeals have been submitted by nurses *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each health authority in Wales since the start of the current process.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Numbers of clinical grading appeals submitted by or on behalf of nurses, midwives and health visitors in Wales are given in the table.

| Health authority | At employing authority level | At regional level (Welsh Appeals Committee) | At national level (negotiating council) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 355 | 160 | 12 |
| East Dyfed | 563 | 110 | 12 |
| Gwent | 1,023 | 416 | 27 |
| Gwynedd | 1,066 | 316 | 47 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 1,349 | 252 | 16 |
| Pembrokeshire | 102 | 56 | 0 |
| Powys | 603 | 215 | 5 |
| South Glamorgan | 1,004 | 293 | 20 |
| West Glamorgan | 424 | 134 | 29 |
| Wales | [1]6,489 | [1]1,952 | [1]168 |

[1] Latest available figures including appeals subsequently withdrawn or invalid.

## Cardiff Bay Barrage

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what appraisal he has made of the report on the costs and benefits of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill commissioned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I have received the report only recently. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when I have had the opportunity to consider it.

### Nurses

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurses are employed, and how many nurse posts are contained in the approved establishment, *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each district health authority in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The available information relates to nursing and midwifery staff; the whole-time equivalent number of such staff at 30 September 1991 is given in the following table:

| | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| Clwyd | 3,566 |
| East Dyfed | 2,226 |
| Pembrokeshire | 771 |
| Gwent | 4,290 |
| Gwynedd | 2,085 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 5,412 |
| Powys | 1,134 |
| South Glamorgan | 4,875 |
| West Glamorgan | 3,560 |
| Welsh Health Common Services Authority | 72 |
| Wales | 27,991 |

Information on establishment is not available centrally.

### Community Hospitals

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to make known his expenditure plans for the balance of £5 million of capital resouces not included in his announcement of 27 February, *Official Report*, column 1152.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I have today made £2 million available for the discretionary use of district health authorities and £1·6 million as a contribution towards the provision of MRI equipment at Morriston hospital and for a mobile unit based in north Wales. In addition, authorities will be invited to submit bids for resources which I intend to provide as a contribution towards the capital cost of providing better day surgery facilities. Over £1·5 million is set aside for this purpose.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims have so far been received for the disability living allowance, broken down by regional disability benefit centre; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what percentage of those claims for disability living allowance requiring further medical evidence necessitated the claimant undergoing a medical examination, broken down for each of the regional disability benefit centres; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the average length of time taken to decide each claim for disability living allowance, broken down for each of the regional disability centres; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what percentage of claims for disability living allowance so far adjudicated on have been awarded benefit; at what rate this benefit has been awarded, broken down for each of the regional disability benefit centres; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what percentage of claims for disability living allowance have been able to be adjudicated as they were received; what percentage required further medical evidence or opinion, broken down for each of the regional disability benefit centres; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of claimants for disability living allowance opted to undergo a medical examination rather than use the self-assessment form, broken down for each regional disability benefit centre; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in 1991-92, how many social fund applicants made *(a)* only one application to the fund, *(b)* two applications, *(c)* three applications, *(d)* four applications, *(e)* five applications and *(f)* six or more applications; and if he will provide a breakdown of these data by client groups.

**Mr. Scott:** This information is not available.

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the total number of people refused help from the social fund on the basis of their inability to repay social fund loans for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what proportion of social fund loans refusals this represents for each year;

(2) if he will publish the social fund loans and grants allocations to individual districts for the year 1992-93.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is contained in the Secretary of State's annual report on the social fund, social fund statistics monthly reports and the allocations lists, copies of which are available in the Library.

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of social fund award expenditure in *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92 has now been written off as unrecoverable.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is in the table.

*Percentage of expenditure for which recovery action has been abandoned*

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 0·06 |
| 1989-90 | 0·90 |
| 1990-91 | 1·20 |
| 1991-92 | 1·00 |

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to ensure that no social fund applicants are refused help as a result of the failure of the computerised allocation system which led to allocations being made to a number of districts which had later to be reduced.

**Mr. Scott:** We have acted swiftly and effectively to correct allocations in a way which minimises disruption. No district has received less than it should have done following these revised allocations.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now publish the York university social and public research unit report on the social fund which he received several weeks ago.

**Mr. Scott:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 25 June at column *308*.

## Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Burt:** The information for the Department and its executive agencies at 1 June 1991 is in the table.

| *Grade* | *Total* | *Registered disabled* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 to 7 | 704 | 3 | 0·4 |
| Others | 77,640 | 1,462 | 1·9 |
| Total | 78,344 | 1,465 | 1·9 |

*Notes:*

1. The figures do not include staff with disabilities who chose not to register or chose not to disclose their registration.
2. The figures do not include over 50 registered disabled people employed under the sheltered placement scheme.
3. For each grade, all non-industrial staff in equivalent grades are included.
4. The figures for grades 1 to 7 have been grouped together as the numbers of registered disabled staff in these grades are very small and they risk identifying an individual.
5. All figures refer to full-time equivalents.

## Income Support

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to monitor the effects of refusal of applications by young people for payment of income support to prevent severe hardship.

**Mr. Burt:** The Department is not in a position to monitor the effects in the manner suggested. Young people who are not entitled to income support under the severe hardship provision are sent a letter giving advice to claim again should their circumstances change, or if they think they are entitled to benefit because a decision was made in ignorance of a material fact or as a result of an error as to fact. Currently more than 80 per cent. of applicants are successful.

## Occupational Pensions

**Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will introduce regulations to implement the employer debt provision for occupational pensions set out in the Social Security Act 1990.

**Mr. Lilley:** I have today laid before Parliament the Occupational Pension Schemes (Deficiency on Winding Up etc.) Regulations 1992 which bring into effect section 58B of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 as introduced by the Social Security Act 1990 under which a deficiency in a pension scheme that is wound up becomes a debt to the employer.

## Cold Weather Payments

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates and in what parts of Moray constituency the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in Moray constituency in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and if he will indicate the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Scott:** Such information as is available is in the Library.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Moray constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

## Vehicle Excise Duty

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has on the type of disability, and age of the person concerned presently benefiting from vehicle excise duty exemption because the person is disabled, under five or over 65 years old and receiving disability living allowance or attendance allowance;

(2) how many persons were in receipt of vehicle excise duty exemption under *(a)* pre-1976 vehicle schemes, *(b)* because they were eligible for the higher rate mobility component of the disability living allowance or *(c)* were under five or over 65 years old and receiving disability living allowance or attendance allowance, for each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(3) how many new first time successful applications there were for vehicle excise duty exemption by disabled people under the three existing possible categories, in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

**Mr. Scott:** The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available on the number of disabled people applying for and receiving exemption is as follows:

*(a) invalid carriage users exempt at;*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 31 March 1988 | 4,672 |
| 31 March 1989 | 3,712 |
| 31 March 1990 | 3,124 |
| 31 March 1991 | 2,760 |
| 31 March 1992 | 2,125 |

There have been no new first time successful applications for exemption during this period since the invalid carriage scheme was phased out in 1976.

*(b)* receipt of the higher rate of the mobility component of disability living allowance; approximately 400,000 receive exemption.

*(c)* disabled passengers scheme users; approximately 20,000 receive exemption. There were 4,183 first time successful applications during the period 1 April 1991—31 March 1992.

### Maxwell Pension Funds

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state how much has been used by Maxwell pension funds in legal fees to try to recover the lost assets; and if he will now underwrite these costs.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The cost of legal fees incurred in recovering assets missing from Maxwell pension funds is a matter for the trustees of the pension schemes concerned. The emergency funding of up to £2·5 million which we have made available will be used soley for payments of pensions.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out his target for recovery of the lost Maxwell assets by the special unit within his Department and, in particular, what proportion of the total assets he aims to have recovered and within what period of time.

**Miss Widdecombe:** It is too early to say how much of the missing assets will prove to be recoverable. Officials in the special unit will do everything they can to assist trustees of Maxwell pension funds, liquidators and others to secure the speedy return of assets and the rebuilding of pension funds to the point where they can meet their liabilities in full.

### Compensation Recovery Scheme

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants have had deductions from benefit entitlement under the compensation recovery scheme; and how much is *(a)* the average amount deducted and *(b)* the total amount reclaimed.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The total amount deducted and paid to the compensation recovery unit up to 31 May 1992 was £35·5 million. The number of claimants involved was 29,216 at an average of approximately £1,200 per case.

## PRIME MINISTER

### National Security

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish Her Majesty's Government's definition of the term national security.

**The Prime Minister:** This term is generally understood to refer to the safeguarding of the state and community against threats to their survival or well-being.

### School Nurses

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister what response he will be making to the Amalgamated School Nurses Association's petition to him, presented on 24 June; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will write and congratulate the association on reaching its centenary year and will also acknowledge the value that her Department attaches to the association's role as a representative body for school nurses and assure the association that it will continue to be consulted about departmental initiatives on the school health service.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

### Civil Service Contracts

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what account has been taken in the planning and estimates of the National Audit Office of the number of staff required to test the value-for-money policies on proposals for contracting out civil service work.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** The Public Accounts Commission will be examining the National Audit Office's estimates for 1993-94 and corporate plan for 1993-94 to 1997-98 early next month. I understand that these take full account of the Government's "Competing for Quality" initiative.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Sinai

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *326*, why it is proposed to end the United Kingdom commitment to the multinational force and observers in Sinai; what response he has received from other signatories of the 1981 protocol establishing the MFO; what are the financial implications of the proposed withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Our decision to review our commitment to the Sinai multinational force and observers reflects financial considerations and the fact that the Israeli-Egyptian border is both stable and internationally recognised. We have received various responses to our decision to withdraw from the signatories to the 1981 protocol, which we are considering. The full cost of the United Kingdom contingent in the financial year 1991-92 was of the order of £1 million.

## Cyprus

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what indications he has received of proposals for changes in the constitution of the United Nations forces in Cyprus; if he proposes to alter the level or nature of the United Kingdom contribution to these forces; until what date the United Kingdom is formally committed to provide forces for the United Nations in Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** As requested in United Nations Security Council resolution 759, the United Nations secretariat is discussing with the United Kingdom and other troop contributors the future size and shape of the United Nations Force in Cyprus. The Secretary-General will report to the Security Council on this question by 1 September. The Security Council reviews UNFICYP every six months: the current mandate lasts until December 1992.

## Westminster Foundation for Democracy

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy since its establishment; to what extent Her Majesty's Government have given it support; and what plans the Government have to develop the foundation's activities.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Westminster Foundation for Democracy was incorporated on 26 February 1992. In accordance with the foundation's articles, I have appointed 14 governors following consultations with the political parties represented at Westminster. They have elected Sir James Spicer as their chairman and Mr. George Robertson and Sir Russell Johnston as vice-chairmen. The Government are providing funding of £1 million for the foundation's activities in this financial year. I have also instructed embassies abroad to help the foundation when requested. Questions about the activities of the foundation and its future plans should, however, be addressed direct to the foundation itself as its operations are independent of the Government.

## Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what implications the clandestine Iraqi nuclear weapon programme has had for his Departments's policy on United Kingdom negative security guarantees regarding the use or threatened use of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The negative security assurance given by the United Kingdom in 1978 remain unchanged.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on establishing a common policy among all the nuclear weapon states regarding negative security guarantees.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** All five nuclear weapon states have already given negative security assurances, although they are not identical. We consider the United Kingdom's guarantee to be sufficient as it stands.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on extending the United Kingdom's negative security guarantees on nuclear weapons into a legally binding convention.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** It is the Government's view that our negative security assurance offers sufficient guarantee, in its present form, to those non-nuclear-weapon states which it is designed to protect.

## ABM Treaty

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the continued adherence of the parties to the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We support the continued adherence of the United States and Russia to the ABM treaty. Any changes to the treaty should be agreed by the two parties.

## Hong Kong

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any proposals to amend or renegotiate the 1984 joint agreement on Hong Kong as signed by Her Majesty's Government and the Chinese Government.

**Mr. Goodlad:** No. Her Majesty's Government remain fully committed to the Sino-British joint declaration on the question of Hong Kong, an international treaty deposited with the United Nations.

## Brazil (Street Children)

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Brazilian authorities about the abduction of street children for use in organ transplants.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We are in touch with the Brazilian authorities on all aspects of the welfare of street children. Our embassy is monitoring closely.

# DEFENCE

## Nuclear Deterrent

13. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the policy of nuclear deterrents in relation to the ownership of nuclear weapons by other states.

**Mr. Rifkind:** In its new strategic concept agreed last autumn, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation reaffirmed that nuclear weapons remain essential to the alliance's strategy for preserving peace. The United Kingdom's independent deterrent is our ultimate safeguard in a world in which many countries have the potential to acquire nuclear and other powerful weapons.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his consideration of how best the United Kingdom might contribute to the strategic nuclear arms control process, as referred to in paragraph 319, Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1991, volume 1.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** We have always made it clear that the United Kingdom would deploy only the minimum

strategic deterrent required for our security needs. The United States and Russia have agreed to reduce their strategic nuclear forces substantially over the next seven to 11 years, reflecting an improved strategic environment. At the same time, there is increasing interest in improving ballistic missile defences and their deployment on a limited basis. These factors will be taken fully into account in keeping under review the capability which will need to be deployed to maintain an effective deterrent into the next century.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assurances he has received from the United States Government regarding implications for the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear deterrent of the sharing of American anti-ballistic missile technology with Russia.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The United States Government have assured us that nothing will be done in connection with United States proposals for limited ballistic missile defences which could undermine the effectiveness of our deterrent.

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on nuclear defence.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Government intend that our independent nuclear deterrent should continue to provide the ultimate guarantee of our security in the decades ahead, as it has for decades past.

## Defence Spending

15. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the anticipated total expenditure on Britain's defence requirements during the current financial year.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The present estimate is £24·2 billion.

## Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

16. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received concerning the nuclear non-proliferation treaty since the general election.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. and learned Friend has received several letters from organisations and members of the public on many aspects of defence policy and arms control, including the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, since the general election.

## "Options for Change"

17. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy on the armed forces in the light of responses to "Options for Change".

**Mr. Rifkind:** In parallel with other NATO countries and those of the former Warsaw pact, our policy is to restructure our forces to meet changed international circumstances. Although smaller, they will be more flexible, more mobile and better-equipped than ever before, and of a scale and quality appropriate to the challenges and risks of an unpredictable world.

27. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reassessments he has made of the proposals in "Options for Change" in the light of potential changes in international security requirements.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs).

## Arms Sales

18. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the sale of arms to other countries.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is our general policy to support the sale of British defence equipment overseas wherever this is compatible with our political, strategic and security interests and does not conflict with our international obligations.

20. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met his Saudi Arabian counterpart to discuss arms sales.

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet had a meeting with the Saudi Arabian Minister of Defence but he looks forward so to doing. His predecessor last met the Saudi Arabian Minister of Defence on 21 January this year.

## Nuclear Test Veterans

19. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet representatives of the Nuclear Test Veterans Association to discuss compensation.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

## Franco-German Corps

23. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his Western European Union partners on the role of the Franco-German corps.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** My right hon. and learned Friend has discussed this subject with a number of his WEU colleagues, most recently at the WEU Council of Ministers meeting near Bonn on 19 June.

## Infantry

22. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about future manning levels for the infantry.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I regularly receive representations from both individuals and interest groups.

24. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the workload of British infantry regiments; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I have received a number of representations regarding infantry commitments all of which have been noted.

## Trident

25. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most recent estimated total cost of the Trident programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) earlier today.

### Dowty Group

26. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the value of the MoD orders placed with the Dowty Group in the last financial year.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department placed contracts to a value of £44 million with the Dowty Group of companies during the financial year 1991-92.

### European Fighter Aircraft

28. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussion he has had with the aerospace industry in relation to the EFA programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** I have regular discussions about EFA with the companies concerned. In addition, several major companies and the Society of British Aerospace companies have provided me with assessments of the industrial importance of the EFA programme in the context of the present uncertainties about Germany's future participation in the project.

30. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will draw up a contingency plan for continuing with the European fighter project to deal with the situation should the German Government withdraw or partially withdraw their support.

**Mr. Aitken:** The Government hope that Germany will not withdraw its support for the European fighter aircraft programme, which is the largest European collaborative project and which represents the most cost-effective solution to the requirements of all four partner nations. If the German Government did, however, decide not to join the production phase of the project, we would need to consider with the remaining partner nations the additional costs, and benefits, of proceeding without Germany's full participation. I hope that in such circumstances it would be possible to continue with the programme on a three-nation basis.

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what alternatives there are to the European fighter aircraft in terms of British defence capability.

**Mr. Rifkind:** In its recent report on the project, the Defence Committee concluded that there was currently no sign of any alternative to EFA which could begin to offer the same level of performance at an acceptable cost, with anything approaching comparable technological benefits. That is the Government's view too.

### Ex-service Personnel (Housing)

29. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to consult local authorities on housing requirements for ex-service personnel.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Department of the Environment circular 54/75 gives local authorities advice about the housing requirements of ex-service personnel. Officials from the Department of Environment and Ministry of Defence are considering the revision and re-issue of this circular.

### Queen's Harbour Master

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete the review of the Queen's Harbour Master's responsibilities lying outside Portsmouth harbour.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Consideration of the future requirements for the dockyard port has only just started. If it is decided to seek changes to the dockyard port order, we shall consult local marine interests and the length of the review will depend very much on the response we receive.

### Defence Estimates

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the Statement on the Defence Estimates.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I hope to publish the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1992 on Tuesday 7 July.

### Libya

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's contacts with the armed forces of Libya.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** There have been no military contacts with Libya since the shooting of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in 1984.

### Trooping the Colour

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the estimated cost of the trooping the colour to public funds in the current year; how many visitors from home and overseas are estimated to have watched the parade; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No additional costs were incurred for the men and horses of the Household Division, as they are already funded. Other costs associated with trooping the colour could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Although it is not possible to establish the exact number of visitors who watched the Trooping the Colour this year, 30,400 tickets were sold for the two rehearsals and the actual parade.

### Biological Warfare

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer on 2 June, *Official Report*,. column *539*, if he will list the countries that possess or seek to acquire a biological warfare capability.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

### Missile Defences

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what aspects of the global protection against limited strikes programme his Department is considering for deployment by the United Kingdom;

(2) what is his policy towards the deployment of theatre missile defences by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** We continue to keep the requirement for defence against ballistic missiles under review, in consultation with the United States and other NATO allies.

## Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards making United Kingdom nuclear weapons available to forces operating under the auspices of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The scale and nature of any United Kingdom contribution to forces operating under the auspices of the Western European Union would be for decision in the light of circumstances at the time.

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department is undertaking regarding the testing of United Kingdom nuclear weapons without the need for underground nuclear explosions.

**Mr. Aitken:** It has long been the practice to use a wide range of laboratory facilities and techniques to contribute to proving the designs of our nuclear weapons, but those techniques cannot wholly substitute for underground nuclear tests. We therefore have a continuing requirement to sustain a minimum underground test programme.

## Anti-ballistic Missiles

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *538*, what is his Department's assessment of the number of countries that will have the capability to deploy anti-ballistic missiles by the year *(a)* 2000 and *(b)* 2010; and if he will list them.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** By the year 2000 and 2010, only Russia and the United States are likely to have the capability to deploy full anti-ballistic missile systems. In addition, a number of other countries could deploy anti-tactical ballistic missiles in the same time frame.

## Free-fall Bombs

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the deployment of the United Kingdom's free-fall nuclear bombs outside the NATO area.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Our policy on the deployment of nuclear weapons is governed by the requirements of national security.

## RAF High Command

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of relocating the staff of administration and personnel sections of the RAF High Command at Brampton and Innsworth; and what is the capital required for the provision of accommodation.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The cost of relocating the administrative and training staffs from Brampton to form the new headquarters personnel and training command at RAF Innsworth is estimated to be £1·8 million. The Department's estimate of the cost of providing additional accommodation at RAF Innsworth cannot be provided as the information is commercially sensitive.

## Postal and Courier Services

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will make a statement about defence support agency status for the defence postal and courier services.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Defence Postal and Courier Services will be established as a defence support agency of the Ministry of Defence on 1 July 1992. The Defence Postal and Courier Services comprise the directorate of the defence postal and courier services, the postal and courier depot—which includes the postal training school and courier wing—and a group to co-ordinate functional tasking and specialist training of postal and courier services Territorial Army personnel. Together, they employ some 285 military personnel and 256 civilians.

The primary role of the Defence Postal and Courier Services is to provide postal and courier services for the safe and secure carriage of all official and personal mail and parcels for United Kingdom armed forces at home and overseas during periods of peace, international tension and war. The primary customers of the agency are service personnel, their dependants and defence establishments at home and overseas. The high professional standards of the Defence Postal and Courier Services will be maintained and agency status will provide the chief executive with new opportunities to improve the efficiency and value for money of his organisation and provide even better services to customers. Brigadier Michael Browne has been appointed as the agency's chief executive.

The chief executive has been set the following targets for 1992-93:

1. Taking account of the experience of Operation Granby, define by 31 December 1992 the core capability—the minimum manpower, equipment and training—to be maintained in peace to meet requirements in crisis and war.
2. Inaugurate service level agreements with service user representatives, other Government Departments and other major users of postal and courier services, by 31 March 1993.
3. Define key output and unit cost measures by 31 March 1993 in order to set targets for the movement of mail and courier items in future years.
4. Introduce management information systems to produce all necessary information including the identification of full costs of services, to support measures of output and unit cost and to meet the accounting requirements for agencies by 31 March 1993.
5. Increase the agency's efficiency by
   a. achieving manpower savings of £1 million by bringing into full service automated letter sorting equipment.
   b. making further efficiency enhancements to the value of £100,000 (1 per cent. of cash budget).
6. Attract receipts in 1992-93 of £2·5 million which will represent an increase in a declining market.

## Defence Operational Analysis Establishment

**Mr. Onslow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future operation of the defence operational analysis establishment at West Byfleet.

**Mr. Aitken:** As was announced on 22 July 1991, *Official Report*, column *448*, the defence operational analysis establishment (DOAE) was among the candidate organisations under consideration for defence support agency (DSA) status. The review of DOAE for agency status has been completed and I am pleased to announce that it will become established as a defence support agency on 1 July 1992 under the title of the Defence Operational

Analysis Centre (DOAC). The director of the establishment, Dr David Leadbeater, has been appointed the chief executive.

There will be no change in the role of the agency. Its aim will continue to be to provide the Ministry of Defence with advice on formulation of defence policy, military operational capability and future equipment requirements; this advice being derived from operational analysis studies and field trials. The greater freedom and flexibility now granted to the director general will provide him with new opportunities to enhance this role.

The move to agency status will build on DOAE's reputation in the field of operational analysis by further improving the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the work carried out by the centre. In order to bring about these improvements, the director general has been set the following range of challenging key performance targets:

*Service to customers*

a. In 1992-93, to complete 75 per cent. of the planned studies for customers within agreed time scales, and to seek progressive improvements in future years.

b. In 1992-93, to complete 75 per cent. of the planned studies for customers within planned cost, and to seek progressive improvements in future years.

c. In 1992-93, to subject 40 per cent. of new major studies to a formal quality plan, which will require peer review and measures of customer satisfaction, and in 1993-94 to increase this to 100 per cent. and to propose for future years a challenging quality target.

d. In 1992-93, to respond to 80 per cent. of requests from MoD customers for unplanned urgent advice within time scales negotiated at the outset and to seek progressive improvements in future years.

*Management Systems*

e. In 1992-93, to introduce a full cost system of accounting and to publish auditable accruals-based accounts in future years.

*Efficiency*

f. While implementing input reductions resulting from "Options for Change", to increase overall efficiency by 2 per cent. in 1992-93 and to achieve progressive improvements in subsequent years.

I wish the chief executive and the staff of the centre every success.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Empty Police Property

**Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in rank order the police authorities of England and Wales, showing the number of vacant police flats and houses in each authority for the most recent date.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The most recent figures available, which are those for 31 March 1991, are set out in the following table:

*Vacant police houses and flats as at 31 March 1991*

| *Police Authority* | *Vacant Houses and Flats* |
|---|---|
| City of London | 0 |
| Cleveland | 2 |
| Bedfordshire | 3 |
| Surrey | 6 |
| Merseyside | 7 |
| Leicestershire | 8 |
| South Yorkshire | 8 |
| West Yorkshire | 9 |
| Warwickshire | 11 |
| Norfolk | 11 |
| Sussex | 12 |
| Northamptonshire | 13 |
| Nottinghamshire | 14 |
| West Midlands | 15 |
| Cambridgeshire | 17 |
| Hertfordshire | 17 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 20 |
| Humberside | 21 |
| Durham | 22 |
| Wiltshire | 25 |
| Dorset | 25 |
| Suffolk | 25 |
| Cheshire | 27 |
| Gwent | 29 |
| Northumbria | 32 |
| Staffordshire | 32 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 34 |
| Lincolnshire | 34 |
| Gloucestershire | 35 |
| Avon and Somerset | 38 |
| Kent | 40 |
| Hampshire | 40 |
| North Yorkshire | 42 |
| Essex | 47 |
| South Wales | 50 |
| West Mercia | 56 |
| Thames Valley | 56 |
| Lancashire | 61 |
| Cumbria | 65 |
| Greater Manchester | 70 |
| North Wales | 70 |
| Derbyshire | 80 |
| Metropolitan Police | 385 |
| Total | 1,614 |

### Electoral Quota

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out, on the assumption of an unchanged number of parliamentary constituencies for England, (a) the 1992 electoral quota and (b) the entitlement of each county and London borough.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 22 June 1992 at cols *7-8* to an identical question from my hon. Friend the member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones).

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Of the total Home Office work force some 0·4 per cent. are registered disabled persons, two members of whom are in grades 1 to 7 or equivalent, representing 0·27 per cent. of staff in those grades. We have no record of the number of staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register. Specific targets have been set to increase the numbers of staff with disabilities employed in my Department. A departmental working group keeps the position under review and has taken a number of initiatives to promote policies and improve practices.

## Channel Islands

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list his powers in respect of the government of the Channel Islands and the states of Jersey, the states of deliberation of Guernsey, the states of Alderney and the chief pleas of Sark.

**Mr. Jack:** The Channel Islands are internally self-governing dependencies of the Crown. The Crown is ultimately responsible for the good government of the Islands and the United Kingdom is directly responsible for their defence and international relations. In exercising its responsibilities for the Islands, the Crown operates through the Privy Council and my right hon. and learned Friend is the Privy Counsellor with particular responsibility for islands matters. This includes advising the Queen in Council as to the grant of Royal Assent to Acts passed by the island legislatures, and advising the Crown on the appointment of Crown officers in the islands.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those measures which he has altered, or prevented the implementation of, following decisions taken by either the government or the legislatures of the Channel Islands over the past five years.

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to direct the drafting of laws within the islands legislatures. As the Privy Counsellor with particular responsibility for islands matters, he advises the Queen in Council as to the grant of Royal Assent to island laws; and the framing of island legislation is often the subject of consultation with the United Kingdom Government.

In 1989 the then Home Secretary declined to recommend that the Interception of Communications (Bailiwick of Guernsey) Law should receive Royal Assent and the law was returned to Guernsey for further consideration.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The latest figures available show that 150 staff in grades 1 to 7 are women: this represents some 20 per cent. In the unified grades 24 per cent. of staff at grade 3, 21 per cent. at grade 5, 10 per cent. at grade 6 and 22 per cent. at grade 7 are women. There are no women in grades 1, 2 or 4. In the Home Office as a whole some 26 per cent. of staff are women.

## Shotgun Certificates

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider amending the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 to prevent shotgun certificates being issued to children.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** We have no plans to introduce a statutory minimum age for the grant of a shotgun certificate. Age is a factor which a chief officer may take into account when considering whether an applicant may be permitted to possess a shotgun without danger to the public safety or the peace.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children aged under 16 years currently hold shotgun certificates, by age; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Isle of Man

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of those matters in which he has altered, or prevented the implementation of, decisions of the executive council of the Isle of Man or legislation that has been passed by the Court of Tynwald, over the past five years.

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to alter the decisions of the executive council of the Isle of Man or to amend legislation passed by the Court of Tynwald. As the Privy Counsellor with particular responsibility for islands matters, he advises the Queen in Council as to the grant of Royal Assent to Isle of Man laws; and the framing of island legislation is often the subject of consultation with the United Kingdom Government.

No Manx legislation has been refused Royal Assent in the past five years.

## Criminal Justice Finances

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total balance of income and expenditure on the criminal justice system over each of the past 10 years; and how that analysis breaks down under the more important main headings.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The available information on net expenditure on the criminal justice system in England and Wales during this period is as follows:

*Net expenditure on the criminal justice system*
*1982-83 to 1991-92*

*£ million*

| | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *[1] 1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Police and forensic science service[2,3] | 2,352 | 2,553 | 2,943 | 2,908 | 3,128 | 3,456 | 3,827 | 4,339 | 4,839 | 5,431 |
| Prisons[3] | 485 | 554 | 601 | 655 | 696 | 775 | 902 | 1,092 | 1,341 | 1,459 |
| Probation[2,3] | 144 | 155 | 173 | 184 | 216 | 224 | 247 | 280 | 320 | 382 |
| Court Services (Home Office) | 3 | 2 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 22 | 26 |
| Criminal Injuries Compensation[4] | 26 | 26 | 34 | 37 | 42 | 47 | 65 | 71 | 100 | 136 |
| Magistrates' Courts[3] | 124 | 139 | 152 | 161 | 177 | 211 | 236 | 275 | 294 | 350 |
| Other Courts (Local Authority)[3] | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 27 | 26 | 30 |
| Crown Courts[5] | — | — | — | — | 74 | 81 | 103 | 112 | 125 | 141 |
| Criminal Legal Aid | 106 | 119 | 135 | 159 | 197 | 240 | 274 | 320 | 372 | 458 |

| | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | [1] 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Crown Prosecution Service[6] | 7 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 67 | 121 | 143 | 170 | 198 | 226 |
| Serious Fraud Office[7] | — | — | — | — | — | — | 7 | 9 | 13 | 18 |
| TOTAL[5] | — | — | — | — | 4,624 | 5,186 | 5,837 | 6,712 | 7,650 | 8,657 |

[1] Provisional outturn.
[2] Central and local government expenditure.
[3] Current and capital expenditure.
[4] Including administration.
[5] Separate figures for expenditure on civil and criminal business in the Crown Courts are not available for 1985-86 or earlier years.
[6] Figures for local government spending prior to 1986-87 (when its responsibilities for criminal prosecutions were transferred to central Government) are not available.
[7] Set up with effect from April 1988.

## Crime, Powys

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of car thefts in Powys in 1991; what were the comparable figures for 1981 and 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the number of homicides in Powys in 1991; what were the comparable figures for 1981 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** The requested information for Powys is not collected centrally.

## Police Complaints Authority

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *204*, which non-Home Office police forces have an agreement with the Police Complaints Authority; and which do not.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Police Complaints Authority has agreements under part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 with six private police forces. These are:

British Transport Police
Ministry of Defence Police
Port of Liverpool Police
Port of Tilbury Police
Royal Parks Constabulary
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary

An exhaustive list of other bodies with powers to appoint a body of constables is not readily available, but agreements have been made with the Police Complaints Authority by all forces whose strengths exceed 100 officers.

## Police (Inquiry)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from non-Home Office police forces, or their officers' federations, about their inclusion within the scope of the inquiry into the role of the police officer that he has instigated.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The chairman of the British Transport Police Federation and the Defence Police Federation and the Secretary of the United Kingdom Atomic Engery Authority Constabulary Federation have written to me to suggest that the forces whose members they represent should be included in the scope of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards. My right hon. and learned Friend has told them that the inquiry will be asked to cover specifically only the 43 forces in England and Wales, the eight Scottish forces and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the detailed terms of reference of the inquiry he announced into the role of the police officer.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend will be announcing the terms of reference and membership of the inquiry very shortly.

## Constables (Vetting)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what vetting and other safeguards exist to ensure the suitability of people sworn in as constables under the provisions of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** It is for the authority responsible for the relevant dock or harbour to exercise its discretion as to the suitability of individual applicants.

Home Office Circular 45/86 provides that criminal records checks may be made on applicants to join a police force, including the ports police covered by the Harbour Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what vetting and other safeguards exist to ensure the suitability of people sworn in as constables and employed by the City of Westminster and London Borough of Wandsworth councils to operate in their parks.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

## Prisons

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons selected for the pilot schemes on staff compacts described in paragraph 4.12 of the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice".

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** No decision has been reached on which establishments should be used for the pilot scheme.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when it is expected that name badges will be introduced for all staff on duty in prisons.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We continue to discuss with staff and their representatives the introduction of name badges. It will be our intention once these discussions have been concluded to obtain and introduce them as soon as practicable.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many prisons male convicted prisoners are now allowed to wear their own clothes.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice", announced the Government's intention to extend the wearing of own clothes by male convicted prisoners. A pilot scheme began at HMP Belmarsh in April 1991 and this will be extended to HMP Wellingborough and HMYOI Huntercombe and Finnamore Wood by the end of this year. HMP Highdown and HMP Woodhill will also allow own clothing when they open this year. In addition, some establishments already allow male convicted prisoners to wear certain items of their own clothing.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the review of the reception and induction arrangements for prisoners to which paragraph 7.17 of the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice" refers.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The review has led to the production of a new guide on the management of admission arrangements which is to be issued to prison governors shortly.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons are likely to provide bail units, and how many to provide bail information schemes, before the end of the current financial year.

**Mr. Jack:** All local prisons and remand centres have a bail unit or bail officer. Bail information schemes are expected to be in place at more than 20 establishments before the end of the current financial year.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in which it is proposed to conduct experiments under which prisoners may have televisions in their cells or rooms.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The White Paper, "Custody, Care and Justice", announced that closely monitored trials would take place at a small number of establishments to test the use of televisions in cells.

A trial of battery-operated televisions began at HMP The Mount in December 1991. Trials of mains-powered sets will be held at Manchester and Stocken prisons when the necessary cabling work has been completed later in the year. In-cell television will be tested in other establishments if the need arises.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what targets he has set for card phones to be available in prisons which currently lack that facility.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The current programme of installation of cardphones for prisoners' use is scheduled for completion by the end of July 1992 save in a small number of establishments undergoing major refurbishment or building work. Installation in these establishments will take place as soon as practicable.

## Constabularies (Enactments)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those constabularies which are maintained by virtue of an enactment.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Police Uniform

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to safeguard the use of the traditional police uniform and control the use of uniforms similar in colour or design.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** No. Section 52 of the Police Act 1964 provides adequate safeguards on the use of police uniforms.

## Police and Constables (Use of Terms)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to control the use of the terms *(a)* constable, *(b)* constabulary, *(c)* police, *(d)* police officer, *(e)* police force and *(f)* police service.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** No. It is already an offence under section 52(1) of the Police Act 1964 to impersonate a member of a police force with intent to deceive.

## Police (Consultation)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what statutory rights to consultation and representation the Police Federation of England and Wales has; and what comparable statutory rights exist for the federations representing the British Transport police, the Port of Tilbury, London police, the Ministry of Defence police and the Atomic Energy Authority police.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Police Federation of England and Wales may represent the interests of members of police forces in connection with proceedings in the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales and the Police Negotiating Board for the United Kingdom, by virtue of sections 44 and 46 of the Police Act 1964 and section 1 of the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980.

Questions concerning the representation of members of those forces referred to which are not covered by the Police Act 1964 are the responsibilities of, respectively, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Transport (British Transport Police; Port of London Police); Defence (Ministry of Defence Police) and Trade and Industry (Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary).

## Obscenity

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to undertake a review of the law on obscenity.

**Mr. Jack:** I am very aware about the concern felt about the effectiveness of the present legislation on obscenity. The Government remain willing to support attempts of reform if these appear workable, are a real improvement on the existing law and are likely to command sufficient public and parliamentary support.

The Government have frequently stated that it recognises the deficiencies of the Obscence Publications Act and would support a further tightening of the law, but we believe that this is an area for Private Member initiative. Recent attempts to reform the law by private Members, including some with Government support, have failed to attract sufficient parliamentary support, illustrating the present lack of consensus as to the best way forward.

### Primary Purpose Rule

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he intends to abolish the immigration primary purpose rule; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what relaxation of the immigration primary purpose rule he has authorised; when he intends making a statement on the changes to the immigration rules he has authorised; and what information he has circulated about these changes to immigration solicitors and advisers;

(3) in how many cases, over the last three months to date, his representatives before immigration appeal adjudicators and the president of the immigration appeal tribunal have sought adjournment of hearings to enable reviews of appeals to be undertaken; and in how many such cases the appellants have been spouses who have been waiting to enter the United Kingdom for more than five years with British citizen children;

(4) what instructions he has issued relating to the interpretation of the immigration primary purpose rule; what is the intended effect of these instructions; and if he will publish his latest instructions;

(5) how many spouses, with British citizen children, appealing against refusal to allow them to enter the United Kingdom, following a review by his Department after the adjournment of their appeal hearings this year, to date; how many such cases are now being reviewed; and what is his estimate of the number of applicants who are affected by the relaxation of the primary purpose rule he has authorised.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to amend the immigration rules covering the admission of spouses for settlement. Guidance has recently been issued to staff on the application of the present Rules in the light of judicial rulings on the relevance of evidence of "intervening devotion" in primary purpose cases. This guidance states that in principle an application from a spouse for an entry clearance or for leave to remain should be allowed when it is accepted that the marriage is genuine and subsisting and either the couple have been married for at least five years or one or more children of the marriage have the right of abode in the United Kingdom. An application might nevertheless be refused, for example, where the applicant's criminal record would make his or her exclusion conducive to the public good or where the sponsor in the United Kingdom is unable to meet the maintenance and accommodation requirements of the immigration rules. It is not possible to estimate accurately the number of applicants who may be affected by this guidance. The statistical information requested is not available. I have no plans to publish this internal guidance to staff or to circulate information about it to immigration solicitors and advisers.

### Immigration (Guidance)

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange to place in the Library copies of the recent guidance issued by his Department relating to the Immigration Act 1971; what is the main subject of this guidance; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend has not passed internal guidance to staff to the president of the immigration appeal tribunal and has no plans to publish such guidance.

### Recidivists

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what future plans he has to assist long-term unemployed recidivists to reintegrate into society.

**Mr. Jack:** The Government plans for those sentenced to imprisonment are set out in "Custody, Care and Justice: The Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales" (Cm 1647) and in its reply (Cm 1837) to the First Report from the Employment Committee, Session 1991-92 on "Employment in Prisons and for Ex-Offenders". Of particular relevance to the needs of long-term prisoners are the plans to introduce this year, sentence planning for all prisoners serving sentences of four years or more and to encourage the development of community prisons, to which long-term prisoners could be transferred in the months prior to their release.

Probation services, in supervising offenders on release from custody or under community sentences, are encouraged to identify employment and training needs and to facilitate these being met, for example through links with training and enterprise councils, the employment service and local employers, voluntary sector projects, including those run by NACRO and the APEX Trust, and through advice to offenders.

### Criminal Justice

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he plans to arrangements for the involvement of members of the judiciary on the Criminal Justice Consultative Council and the area criminal justice liaison committees.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Following consultation with the Lord Chief Justice, I have agreed that Lord Justice Farquharson will become chairman of the Criminal Justice Consultative Council with immediate effect. Judges will also chair the 24 area criminal justice liaison committees which will meet initially in the autumn.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Truck Sales (Libya)

**Mr. Madel:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has decided to take following representations made to him by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West concerning the proposed sale of civilian trucks by AWD Bedford Trucks of Dunstable to Libya, and following meetings last week by representatives of the company with his officials; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** I am aware of AWD Bedford Trucks proposed sale of civilian lorries to Libya. However, as the company is now in receivership it is for the administrative receivers to decide how best to proceed.

### Brazil

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that no illegally felled mahogany from Brazilian forests is imported into the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Needham:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 20 May to the hon. and learned Member for St. Helen's, North (Mr. Evans) *Official Report*, column *157*.

To the extent that certain species of mahogany are covered by the convention on international trade in endangered species, Her Majesty's Customs is responsible for enforcing restrictions on imports from Brazil of any other source.

## Regional Assistance

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many awards of regional selective assistance, and of what value, have been made to firms in Cannock and Burntwood in each of the past five years.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The number of offers of regional selective assistance and the value of those offers made to firms in Cannock and Burntwood in each of the past five years were:

| | *Number* | *£'000 Value* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 16 | 500 |
| 1988-89 | 4 | 160 |
| 1989-90 | 4 | 129 |
| 1990-91 | 7 | 177 |
| 1991-92 | 3 | 57 |

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade with regard to the European regional development fund and additionality, when he will publish his final details of transitional arrangements for 1992-93; if he will indicate the Government's policy for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** On 17 February my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced that in settlement of the disagreement with the European Commission about the public expenditure treatment of ERDF grants, new arrangements were to be introduced. Since then, systems for their detailed implementation have been drawn up.

The new arrangements, from April 1993, are as follows: full and separately indentifiable cover in the public expenditure survey is to be provided for all forecast ERDF receipts; the presentation of ERDF grants in public expenditure publications is to be made more transparent; to promote value for money, a wider range of bodies will be encouraged to apply for ERDF finance.

It has been decided that, from April 1993 local authorities in England and Wales will receive supplementary credit approvals to the full value of ERDF grants that they receive in respect of expenditure defrayed on approved capital projects. These supplementary credit approvals assist authorities in financing their ERDF-funded expenditure. In Scotland, there will similarly be full and specific public expenditure cover, reflecting the different capital finance arrangements there. My Department will co-ordinate the necessary forecasting and monitoring of ERDF receipts.

The agreement between the Commission and the Government recognised that the above arrangements could not be implemented earlier than the financial year which starts in April 1993. It was agreed, however, that there should be special transitional arrangements. It has now been decided that these should be as outlined.

In respect of ERDF grants to local authority capital projects, supplementary credit approvals—separate public expenditure cover in Scotland—will be made available to finance expenditure in 1992-93 to the full value of ERDF RECHAR grants. Arrangements will be introduced for those authorities whose cover can be shown to be insufficient in respect of ERDF grants drawn down under other Community-aided programmes.

European regional development fund RECHAR grants for purposes other than local authority capital projects will be assured of the necessary public expenditure cover. For all other forecast ERDF grants, arrangements have been made to identify the likely scale of the public expenditure requirements and to consider how far currently available resources are available to meet them. All the necessary guidance will be issued to Department before the recess.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure on regional financial assistance to each development area and intermediate area in the Northern region in each year since the last revision of assisted areas held in 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *62-64*.

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure on regional financial assistance for the development areas and intermediate areas in each of the assisted regions of Great Britain, including Scotland, in each year since the 1984 revision of the assisted areas *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* 1984 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Information on expenditure on regional financial assistance, converted to 1984-85 prices, is as follows:

*Regional financial assistance at 1984-85 prices*

| | *1984-85* | | *1985-86* | | *1986-87* | | *1987-88* | | *1988-89* | | *1989-90* | | *1990-91* | | *1991-92* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* | *DA* | *IA* |
| East Midlands | 9·7 | 1·7 | 7·6 | 0·8 | 9·4 | 0·5 | 7·5 | 0·7 | 6·7 | 0·5 | 6·7 | 0·5 | 3·6 | 0·3 | 1·4 | 0·3 |
| Northern | 106·1 | 1·1 | 80·0 | 1·0 | 106·4 | 4·0 | 73·3 | 2·2 | 92·4 | 2·9 | 74·3 | 1·7 | 44·6 | 2·3 | 29·8 | 0·8 |
| North West | 93·1 | 3·1 | 68·3 | 4·1 | 105·1 | 5·5 | 50·8 | 6·2 | 46·7 | 8·1 | 38·5 | 8·2 | 27·4 | 5·9 | 19·1 | 5·7 |
| South West | 11·8 | 0·3 | 10·0 | 0·8 | 18·3 | 0·8 | 8·0 | 1·9 | 6·6 | 2·6 | 4·5 | 2·1 | 2·3 | 2·0 | 2·1 | 2·3 |
| West Midlands | — | — | — | 5·9 | — | 9·5 | — | 16·4 | — | 20·5 | — | 15·1 | — | 12·7 | — | 5·7 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 32·0 | 6·3 | 27·2 | 4·5 | 27·5 | 7·2 | 18·5 | 9·4 | 25·6 | 7·5 | 10·6 | 6·5 | 8·7 | 4·8 | 3·6 | 4·6 |
| England | 252·7 | 12·5 | 193·1 | 17·1 | 266·7 | 27·5 | 158·1 | 36·7 | 177·9 | 42·1 | 134·6 | 34·0 | 86·7 | 28·0 | 56·0 | 19·4 |
| Scotland | 137·3 | 3·6 | 143·0 | 4·5 | 183·2 | 5·4 | 94·7 | 6·5 | 87·2 | 6·0 | 73·1 | 4·8 | 72·2 | 7·3 | 45·5 | 6·2 |
| Wales | 110·4 | 1·7 | 98·9 | 2·4 | 102·9 | 3·8 | 65·6 | 5·5 | 67·3 | 9·9 | 37·4 | 12·6 | 26·4 | 11·5 | 32·6 | 14·4 |
| Great Britain | 500·4 | 17·8 | 435·1 | 23·9 | 552·9 | 36·7 | 318·4 | 48·7 | 332·4 | 58·0 | 245·1 | 51·4 | 185·3 | 46·8 | 134·1 | 40·0 |

*Note:* The table comprises expenditure on regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants.

Expenditure at current prices on regional financial assistance was set out in my answer of 5 June to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) *Official Report*, columns *675-76*.

### Blue Arrow plc

**Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the considerations which inhibit the publication of the report by his Department's inspectors into the conduct of Blue Arrow plc.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend's predecessor decided to delay publication of the inspectors' report in the light of representations made to him. It is intended to publish the report as soon as it is appropriate to do so.

### Aircraft Industry

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will detail the functions of his Department in relation to the civil and military aircraft industry.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The full range of the Department's services to industry is available to the United Kingdom aircraft industry. The Department's air task force is responsible for sponsoring the industry and ensuring that the industry's views are fully taken into account by Government and in the course of international negotiations. It manages the civil aircraft research and demonstration programme, which provided £25 million in 1991-92 to help the industry maintain its technological base. The task force is also responsible for appraising applications for launch aid.

### Emergency Standby Vessels

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many emergency standby vessels have been built in United Kingdom shipyards, for work in the United Kingdom offshore oil and gas industries, in each of the past five years; and what was the amount of financial assistance given by way of the European Community seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund for the construction of each vessel.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** No such vessels have been built in the United Kingdom.

### Bankruptcies

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the number of bankruptcies in businesses employing fewer than 50 people in Wales for each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the number of bankruptcies in the Northern region for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Internal Market Council

**Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outcome of the Internal Market Council held on 18 June.

**Mr. Needham:** I represented the United Kingdom at the Internal Market Council in Luxembourg on 18 June. There was a heavily loaded agenda. The council reached agreement on the procurement of services by the utilities, thus completing the Community's public procurement regime. A common position was also agreed on a directive in the copyright area covering public lending rights and rental. I was obliged to abstain on this measure in view of the unnecessary reversal of the principle in the United Kingdom that it is the producer, rather than the director, who is the author of a film. I secured a transitional period until 1997 for the United Kingdom, during which the producer will retain rights as author of a film. The Commission agreed to carry out a study on this point before that date.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs, attended the council for the discussion on the European company statute, where no decisions were reached. Considerable progress was made on the Community system for the authorisation of medicines.

An important feature of the Council was a determined, if ultimately unsuccessful, effort by the Portuguese Chairman, Mr Martins, to achieve agreement on two linked proposals for a directive and a regulation on the export of cultural goods. The issue will be passed on to the British Presidency.

### Radiocommunications Agency

**Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set the Radiocommunications Agency for 1992-93.

**Mr. Leigh:** The following key targets have been set for 1992-93 and will appear in the agency's annual report 1991: overall financial efficiency improvement of 2 per cent.; quality of service targets covering its licensing work and enforcement activities as detailed.

*Licensing*

99 per cent. of new aeronautical applications to be processed and despatched within two working days;
99 per cent. of new aircraft applications to be processed and despatched within three working days—four working days for amendments;
88 per cent. of ships, radio licences to be issued within one month;
96 per cent. of maritime business radio cases to be actioned within one month;
90 per cent. of new private mobile radio applications and amendments to be processed within 30 working days. Average time for processing new applications and amendments being within 10 working days and 20 working days respectively;
99 per cent. of new on-site paging applications and amendments to be processed and despatched within four working days.

*Enforcement*

100 per cent. of safety of life services complaints to be handled within 24 hours;
98 per cent. of business complaints to be handled within five working days;
98 per cent. of domestic complaints to be handled within one month.

### Accounts Services Agency

**Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set his Department's Accounts Services Agency for 1992-93.

**Mr. Eggar:** My Department's Accounts Services Agency, which was launched as an executive agency on 1 October 1991, has been set the following key performance targets for 1992-93:

to achieve full economic cost recovery;

to make an efficiency gain of 1·7 per cent. over 1991-92, through a reduction in cost per transaction;

to effect 97 per cent. of payments—including travel and subsistence claims—within three working days of receipt of a claim by the agency;

to bank all cheques within 36 hours of their receipt by the agency;

at the end of each month to ensure that all notified transactions are properly recorded on the Department's financial management information system and that operating statements are produced and despatched by the sixth working day.

## RETEX

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the details of the European Community's RETEX initiative, and indicate what action he is taking to ensure that regions of the United Kingdom are considered for assistance under this project.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The European Commission has decided that grants under the RETEX initiative, for regions heavily dependent on the textiles and clothing sector, should be available only within areas designated for objective 1, 2 and 5(b) of the structural funds. Macclesfield is not so designated.

The Commission has asked the Government to decide by 4 December 1992 which parts of the designated areas should receive RETEX grants.

## Expo 92

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what wines are available for sale at the Expo 92 in Seville in *(a)* restaurants, *(b)* cafeterias and *(c)* other outlets, from (i) Great Britain, (ii) other EC countries and (iii) countries outside the EC; and what instructions have been given to the caterers Lyonhart with a view to them marketing and selling English wine in the British pavilion;

(2) if he will arrange for English wine to be displayed in the British pavilion at Expo 92 in Seville with a statement on where it can be bought in the pavilion; and if he will make it readily available in the main restaurant, and all other food and cafeteria outlets in the British pavilion.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The catering concessionaires, Lionheart Catering Ltd., have been instructed to make a range of English wines available in the British pavilion, and the following are on sale there:

Bruisyard 1990, Bruisyard Wines
Fumé 1990, Thames Valley Vineyard
Noble Bacchus 1990, Chiltern Valley
Pinot Noir, Thames Valley Vineyard
Staple St. James 1989, Staple Vineyard
Three Choirs 1990, Three Choirs Vineyard
Wooton 1990, Gillespie, North Wooton

The availability of these wines is promoted by means of product displays in the restaurants and behind the bar in the British pavilion at Expo 92 together with the wine list and notices stating that they are for sale. It would entail disproportionate cost to identify all the other wines on sale at Expo 92.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if English wine was used at the British national day reception in May in the British pavilion, at Expo 92;

(2) if English wine has been served at all the receptions given by the Government and Government officials in the British pavilion at Expo 92; and if he will make it his policy to ensure British wine is served at all future receptions.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Now that a range of still English wines has been supplied, we shall continue to serve one or more of them at all functions hosted by the Government and Government officials in the British pavilion at Expo 92. English wine was not used at the British national day reception in May in the British pavilion because no English sparkling wine suitable for this occasion was available from the catering concessionaire.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will arrange for all Spanish wine for sale and consumption to be removed from the British pavilion at Expo 92.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* No. Although I have insisted that the catering concessionaire makes available a range of English wines, this alone does not provide the choice of price and varieties required to run a commercial operation.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assessment he has made of the consequences for English wines and English sparkling wines of Bollinger champagne's sponsorship in the British pavilion at Expo 92;

(2) for what reasons it has been decided not to make the English white sparkling wine which was selected by the caterers who have the concession for catering at the Expo 92 available for sale in the British pavilion.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Bollinger champagne's sponsorship in the British pavilion at Expo 92 was assessed to have no direct consequences for English wines or English sparkling wines because these products are in rather different market sectors. The catering concessionaire for the British pavilion did not include a sparkling wine in its selection of English wines.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Industrial Tribunals

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints were made to industrial tribunals in each of the last five years for which records are available; how many and what percentage involved *(a)* unfair dismissal, *(b)* redundancy rights, *(c)* maternity rights, *(d)* equal pay, *(e)* sex discrimination, *(f)* race discrimination, *(g)* trade union discrimination or *(h)* other matters; how many and what percentage of such claims were settled before the hearing; how many and what percentage reached a hearing; and how many and what percentage were successful.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The tables set out information available on cases dealt with for the five years up to end of 31 March 1991. The first table shows all applications dealt with within each jurisdiction, and the following tables give a breakdown of the outcomes of each jurisdiction.

*Breakdown of jurisdictions dealt with*

| | 1990-91 | | 1989-90 | | 1988-89 | | 1987-88 | | 1986-87 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. | Number | Per cent. |
| Unfair dismissal | 19,183 | 53·6 | 17,714 | 55·6 | 17,435 | 59·5 | 20,673 | 60·4 | 27,787 | 70·5 |
| Redundancy rights | 5,262 | 14·7 | 4,049 | 12·7 | 3,375 | 11·5 | 3,594 | 10·5 | 5,906 | 15·0 |
| Maternity rights | 48 | 0·1 | 44 | 0·1 | 96 | 0·3 | 137 | 0·4 | 223 | 0·6 |
| Equal pay | 508 | 1·4 | 397 | 1·2 | 813 | 2·8 | 1,043 | 3·1 | 517 | 1·3 |
| Sex discrimination | 1,078 | 3·0 | 1,046 | 3·3 | 935 | 3·2 | 691 | 2·0 | 612 | 1·6 |
| Race discrimination | 926 | 2·6 | 939 | 2·9 | 839 | 2·9 | 709 | 2·0 | 672 | 1·7 |
| Trade union discrimination[1] | 324 | 0·9 | 340 | 1·1 | 343 | 1·2 | 4,128 | 12·1 | 1,436 | 3·6 |
| Trade union discrimination[2] | 128 | 0·3 | 237 | 0·7 | 133 | 0·4 | 390 | 1·1 | 111 | 0·3 |
| Other | 8,469 | 23·4 | 7,147 | 22·4 | 5,348 | 18·2 | 2,868 | 8·4 | 2,140 | 5·4 |
| TOTAL | 35,826 | — | 31,913 | — | 29,317 | — | 34,233 | — | 39,404 | — |

*Outcomes by jurisdiction (percentages are of totals shown in the first table)*

*(a) Unfair Dismissal*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 12,011 | (62·6) | 4,966 | (25·9) | 2,173 | (11·3) |
| 1989-90 | 11,771 | (66·4) | 5,700 | (32·2) | 2,183 | (12·3) |
| 1988-89 | 11,519 | (66·0) | 5,655 | (32·4) | 2,137 | (12·3) |
| 1987-88 | 13,279 | (64·2) | 7,142 | (29·4) | 2,345 | (11·3) |
| 1986-87 | 18,134 | (65·3) | 9,011 | (32·4) | 3,051 | (11·0) |

*(b) Redundancy Rights*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 3,200 | [1](60·8) | 1,966 | (37·4) | 1,334 | (25·3) |
| 1989-90 | 2,423 | (59·8) | 1,520 | (37·5) | 1,017 | (25·1) |
| 1988-89 | 1,846 | (54·7) | 1,461 | (43·3) | 948 | (28·0) |
| 1987-88 | 1,731 | (48·2) | 1,805 | (50·2) | 1,245 | (34·6) |
| 1986-87 | 3,341 | (56·6) | 2,441 | (41·3) | 1,724 | (29·2) |

[1] ACAS does not conciliate in redundancy pay issues.

*(c) Maternity Rights*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 36 | (75·0) | 12 | (25·0) | 5 | (10·4) |
| 1989-90 | 34 | (77·0) | 10 | (22·7) | 5 | (11·4) |
| 1988-89 | 64 | (66·7) | 28 | (30·4) | 12 | (13·0) |
| 1987-88 | 99 | (72·3) | 33 | (24·1) | 18 | (13·1) |
| 1986-87 | 163 | (73·1) | 60 | (26·9) | 32 | (14·3) |

*(d) Equal Pay*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 310 | (61·0) | 35 | (6·9) | 10 | (1·7) |
| 1989-90 | 274 | (69·0) | 55 | (13·8) | 33 | (8·3) |
| 1988-89 | 445 | (54·7) | 63 | (7·7) | 47 | (5·8) |
| 1987-88 | 839 | (80·4) | 24 | (2·3) | 7 | (0·7) |
| 1986-87 | 353 | (68·3) | 161 | (31·1) | 44 | (8·5) |

*(e) Sex Discrimination*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 759 | (70·4) | 298 | (27·6) | 78 | (7·2) |
| 1989-90 | 754 | (72·1) | 280 | (26·8) | 86 | (8·2) |
| 1988-89 | 635 | (67·9) | 250 | (26·7) | 78 | (8·3) |
| 1987-88 | 468 | (67·7) | 208 | (30·1) | 46 | (6·6) |
| 1986-87 | 398 | (65·0) | 201 | (32·8) | 48 | (7·8) |

*(f) Race Discrimination*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 556 | (60·0) | 316 | (34·1) | 47 | (5·0) |
| 1989-90 | 554 | (59·0) | 336 | (35·8) | 61 | (6·5) |
| 1988-89 | 478 | (57·0) | 324 | (38·6) | 54 | (6·4) |

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 398 | (56·1) | 265 | (37·4) | 61 | (8·6) |
| 1986-87 | 351 | (52·2) | 296 | (44·0) | 40 | (5·9) |

*(g) Trade Union Discrimination (1): Dismissals*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 225 | (69·4) | 97 | (30·0) | 29 | (8·9) |
| 1989-90 | 181 | (53·2) | 154 | (45·3) | 88 | (25·9) |
| 1988-89 | 235 | (68·5) | 103 | (30·0) | 17 | (4·9) |
| 1987-88 | 3,966 | (96·1) | 157 | (3·8) | 35 | (0·8) |
| 1986-87 | 1,065 | (74·2) | 233 | (16·2) | 53 | (3·7) |

*(h) Trade Union Discrimination (2): Action short of dismissal*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 59 | (46·1) | 52 | (40·6) | 37 | (28·9) |
| 1989-90 | 129 | (54·4) | 106 | (44·7) | 49 | (20·7) |
| 1988-89 | 116 | (87·2) | 16 | (12·0) | 3 | (2·3) |
| 1987-88 | 374 | (95·9) | 16 | (4·1) | 5 | (1·3) |
| 1986-87 | 63 | (56·8) | 47 | (42·3) | 5 | (4·5) |

*(i) Other matters*

| | Settled | Percentage | Reached full hearing | Percentage | Successful at hearing | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 4,911 | (58·7) | 7,147 | (30·9) | 1,433 | (17·1) |
| 1989-90 | 4,894 | (68·5) | 2,027 | (28·4) | 1,035 | (14·5) |
| 1988-89 | 4,089 | (76·5) | 1,031 | (19·3) | 566 | (10·6) |
| 1987-88 | 1,960 | (68·3) | 812 | (28·3) | 294 | (10·2) |
| 1986-87 | 1,515 | (70·8) | 623 | (29·1) | 294 | (13·7) |

*Key:*
UD—Unfair dismissal—excludes dismissals on grounds of pregnancy, trade union membership or activities, or non-membership.
Red—Redundancy rights—includes claims for redundancy payments and redundancy provisions of Employment Protection Act 1975.
Mat—Maternity rights—includes maternity pay, dismissal on grounds of pregnancy and refusal of right to return to work after maternity absence, but excludes time off for ante-natal care.
EqP—Equal Pay.
SD—Sex discrimination.
RD—Race discrimination.
TU(1)—Trade union discrimination: dismissals on grounds of trade union membership or activities, or non-membership.
TU(2)—Trade union discrimination: action short of dismissal—excludes time off for trade union duties and activities.

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of officers in grades, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in her Department are women.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Overall, the Department employs 41,555 women who comprise 66·5 per cent. of the total staff. Information on the numbers and percentages of women in grades 1 to 7 is set out in the table.

*Women in the employment department group (grades 1-7) at 1 April 1992*

| Grade | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 1 | 0 (of 2) | 0 |
| Grade 2 | 1 | 20 |
| Grade 3 | 2 | 7·1 |
| Grade 4 | 0 (of 15) | 0 |
| Grade 5 | 21·5 | 15·6 |
| Grade 6 | 30·5 | 13·4 |
| Grade 7 | 151·5 | 15·6 |

The numbers shown are full-time equivalents i.e. part-time staff counted as 0·5 staff units.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measurable progress has been made in improving the position of women since she became Secretary of State.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave him on 20 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *163*.

## Training

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms at 1991-92 prices the amount of money her Department provided for training in North Yorkshire in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and the amount of money it has allocated for training in North Yorkshire in 1992-93.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information is not available in the format requested.

Figures for north Yorkshire for 1989-90 are not available as the area covered by the former Training Agency Leeds area office and the North Yorkshire training and enterprise council (TEC) are not comparable.

Since 25 June 1990, training in north Yorkshire has been the reponsibility of North Yorkshire TEC.

I am not at present in a position to give the corresponding information for 1992-93.

The information for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is shown in the table.

*North Yorkshire TEC budget allocations 1990-91 and at 1991-92 prices*
*£ millions*

| *1990-1 Budget* | | *1991-92 Budget* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Cash* | *1991-92 Prices* | *Cash* | *1991-92 Prices* |
| 9·90 | 10·59 | 15·79 | 15·79 |

*Note:* Budget figures are from when North Yorkshire TEC became operational on 25 June 1990.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the Training and Enterprise Council budget is being spent on training for the long-term unemployed.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Training for long-term unemployed people and other eligible groups is provided through Employment Training (ET). The sum of £798 million is planned to be spent on ET in Great Britain in 1992-93. This is just over one third of total planned expenditure of some £2,200 million on labour market programmes delivered by training and enterprise councils (TECs) and local enterprise companies (LECs). Some 70 per cent. of ET starts were previously unemployed for six months or longer. No precise estimate of the amount spent on long-term unemployed people on ET is available, but it is unlikely to be lower than 70 per cent. of the total ET budget.

Training is not always the most appropriate way of meeting the needs of unemployed and long-term unemployed people. The Government therefore provide a range of other help which is delivered by TECs/LECs, including the employment action programme and help for those wishing to become self-employed, as well as a range of programmes including jobclubs delivered by the Employment Service.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training credits have been issued in the pilot areas to young people; how many young people have taken them up; what other information she has on the take up of credits in those areas; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** In 1991-92, the first year of operation, it is provisionally estimated that training and enterprise councils and one local enterprise company issued—using different issuing criteria—about 42,000 training credits to young people in the 11 pilot areas in Great Britain. Of these, about 21,400 actually began training using their credit. It is estimated that about 60 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds entering the labour market in the pilot areas have begun to use their training credits.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will publish the budget agreed with each training and enterprise council in England and Wales for 1992-93, broken down into the five major expenditure blocks; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am not at present in a position to give the information on the budget allocations for 1992-93 for each training and enterprise council in England.

Information for Wales is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to answer.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest available information she has on the characteristics of those who have entered employment training showing *(a)* whether male or female, *(b)* duration of unemployment, *(c)* ethnic origin and *(d)* whether they have a disability, broken down for each region and for Great Britain as a whole.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is in the table.

*Employment training characteristics of entrants*
*October 1991 to December 1991*

*Percentage figures*

| *Region* | *Men* | *Women* | *Unemployment duration (months)* | | | | *Ethnic origin*[1] | | | | | *People with disabilities*[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *0–5* | *6–12* | *13–23* | *24+* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* | *Yes* | *No* |
| South-East | 67 | 33 | 23 | 53 | 13 | 12 | 93 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 89 |
| London | 57 | 43 | 24 | 46 | 14 | 16 | 52 | 28 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 94 |
| South-West | 70 | 30 | 31 | 47 | 12 | 10 | 95 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 89 |
| West Midlands | 71 | 29 | 23 | 48 | 13 | 16 | 84 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 90 |
| East Midlands and Eastern | 68 | 32 | 29 | 45 | 14 | 13 | 89 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 88 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 70 | 30 | 35 | 39 | 11 | 14 | 91 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 91 |
| North-West | 68 | 32 | 37 | 35 | 11 | 17 | 92 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 92 |
| Northern | 72 | 28 | 26 | 43 | 14 | 17 | 97 | [3]— | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 91 |
| Wales | 69 | 31 | 37 | 39 | 11 | 13 | 95 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 89 |
| Scotland | 67 | 33 | 36 | 34 | 11 | 19 | 97 | [3]— | [3]— | 1 | 1 | 9 | 91 |
| Great Britain | 68 | 32 | 31 | 42 | 12 | 15 | 88 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 91 |

*Notes:*
All figures are percentages, figures may not total 100 because of rounding.

[1] Ethnic origin: 1—White, 2—Black/African/Caribbean, 3—Indian/Pakistan/Bangladeshi/Sri Lankan, 4—None of these, 5—Prefer not to say.

[2] People with disabilities. These trainees answering whether they had a long-term health problem or disability which affected the type of work they could do.

[3] — Less than 0·5 per cent.

*Source:* ET starts database.

**Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the best information she has for Great Britain and for each standard region on the numbers of output-related payments made to training and

enterprise councils for each national vocational qualification level for youth training and employment training, and the number of output-related payments made to training and enterprise councils for job entries for employment training; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information relating to England and Wales is provided in the table and represents the latest available payments made during the 1991-92 operating year. Information relating to Scotland is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to answer.

The figures relate to TECs only and do not represent full years for London and north-west as not all TECs in these regions were operational at 1 April 1992.

*South-East*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 123 |
| NVQ level 2 | 4,322 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 1,169 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 4,134 |
| ORF CAT B | 1,893 |
| ORF CAT C | 243 |
| ORF CAT D | 104 |
| ORF CAT E | 23 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 4,261 |

*London*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 420 |
| NVQ level 2 | 1,433 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 456 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 2,675 |
| ORF CAT B | 3,466 |
| ORF CAT C | 496 |
| ORF CAT D | 111 |
| ORF CAT E | 18 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 2,804 |

*South-West*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 294 |
| NVQ level 2 | 5,146 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 2,538 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 3,290 |
| ORF CAT B | 2,309 |
| ORF CAT C | 132 |
| ORF CAT D | 59 |
| ORF CAT E | 2 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 3,351 |

*West Midlands*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 195 |
| NVQ level 2 | 4,813 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 1,201 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 3,154 |
| ORF CAT B | 3,186 |
| ORF CAT C | 210 |
| ORF CAT D | 61 |
| ORF CAT E | 5 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 3,220 |

*East Midlands*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 274 |
| NVQ level 2 | 5,926 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 1,567 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 4,139 |
| ORF CAT B | 2,554 |
| ORF CAT C | 162 |
| ORF CAT D | 27 |
| ORF CAT E | 4 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 4,170 |

*Yorkshire and Humberside*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 544 |
| NVQ level 2 | 6,577 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 1,746 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 8,130 |
| ORF CAT B | 5,032 |
| ORF CAT C | 193 |
| ORF CAT D | 108 |
| ORF CAT E | 29 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 8,267 |

*Northern*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 401 |
| NVQ level 2 | 3,392 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 722 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 5,000 |
| ORF CAT B | 3,449 |
| ORF CAT C | 160 |
| ORF CAT D | 42 |
| ORF CAT E | 11 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 5,053 |

*North-West*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 744 |
| NVQ level 2 | 8,815 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 3,300 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 8,090 |
| ORF CAT B | 6,901 |
| ORF CAT C | 213 |
| ORF CAT D | 306 |
| ORF CAT E | 30 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 8,426 |

*Wales*

| | *Volume* |
|---|---|
| *Youth training* | |
| NVQ level 1 | 298 |
| NVQ level 2 | 3,069 |
| NVQ level 3-4 | 784 |
| *Employment training* | |
| ORF CAT A | 4,100 |
| ORF CAT B | 2,350 |
| ORF CAT C | 163 |
| ORF CAT D | 11 |
| ORF CAT E | 0 |
| Total ET Job Entries | 4,111 |

*Note:*
The definitions for the ET ORF Categories is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Category A | Number of trainees who gain a job, become self employed or enter full time education—but not ET. |
| Category B | Number of trainees who gain NVQ level 1 or 2 or VQ equivalents. |
| Category C | Number of trainees who gain VNVQ level 3 or higher. |
| Category D | Number of skills shortage and returners who gain a job or become self employed plus NVQ level 2. |
| Category E | Number of skills shortage and returners who gain a job or become self employed plus NVQ level 3 or higher. |

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the numbers on youth training in each of the last five years; and what percentage that represented of the cohort for each of these years.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The number of people on the youth training scheme, youth training or receiving training credits in Great Britain in March in each of the past five years is given in the table. The table also shows the number expressed as a percentage of the estimated population of 16 to 18-year-olds.

*Numbers in youth training[1] and percentage of the population aged 16-18 in youth training, Great Britain*

| | *Number in training[2]* | *Percentage of all aged 16-18* |
|---|---|---|
| March 1988 | 375,600 | 15·0 |
| March 1989 | 376,600 | 15·6 |
| March 1990 | 343,800 | 15·0 |
| March 1991 | 314,200 | 14·5 |
| March 1992 | [3]295,800 | 14·4 |

[1] 1988-90 youth training scheme, 1991-92 youth training including training credits.
[2] These figures will include very small numbers of individuals aged 15 or 19.
[3] Provisional figure.
*Sources of information :*
YTS: 1988-90 'SPECTRUM' YTS management information system.
YT: 1991-92 OSMOSIS and financial management information systems.
Percentage of all aged 16 to 18: Based on estimates of Great Britain population at end March derived by the Department of Employment from mid-year population estimates (1987-90) and projections (1991-92) supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and the Government Actuary's Department.

**Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her latest estimate of the number of persons under all forms of state-supported training schemes at the latest date for which information is available.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** In March 1992 there were nearly 445,000 people on the Department of Employment's training programmes, employment and youth training and training credits, in Great Britain. We have no information on the numbers on training schemes funded by other state organisations.

## Umemployment

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage unemployment rose in the past 12 months in each of the EC and Group of Seven countries.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The table shows the changes in the internationally comparable unemployment rates, for EC and Group of Seven countries, over the latest available 12 months. Where no rates are produced for a particular country by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), harmonised rates produced by the Statistical Office of the European Community (SOEC) are given instead.

*Change in Percentage Unemployment Rates over the Latest 12 Months in EC and Group of Seven Countries*
*Standardised Unemployment Rates Seasonally Adjusted*

| | *Latest Month* | *Unemployment rates* *Current per cent.* | *12 months ago per cent.* | *Change in rate* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Republic of Ireland** | April 1992 | 17·6 | 15·5 | 2·1 |
| **United Kingdom**[1] | April 1992 | 10·4 | 8·9 | 1·5 |
| **Canada**[1] | April 1992 | 11·0 | 10·1 | 0·9 |
| **France**[1] | April 1992 | 10·0 | 9·2 | 0·8 |
| **Spain** | November 1991 | 16·5 | 15·8 | 0·7 |
| **Belgium** | April 1992 | 8·3 | 7·6 | 0·7 |
| **Denmark**[2] | April 1992 | 9·0 | 8·4 | 0·6 |
| United States[1] | April 1992 | 7·1 | 6·5 | 0·6 |
| **Luxembourg**[2] | April 1992 | 1·9 | 1·6 | 0·3 |
| **Germany**[2] | April 1992 | 4·5 | 4·5 | n/c |
| **Italy**[1] | January 1992 | 9·9 | 10·0 | −0·1 |
| **Japan**[1] | April 1992 | 2·0 | 2·1 | −0·1 |
| **Netherlands** | March 1992 | 6·9 | 7·2 | −0·3 |
| **Portugal** | November 1991 | 4·1 | 4·5 | −0·4 |

EC countries in bold.
[1] Group of Seven countries.
[2] There are no reliable figures available as yet for the unified Germany. Figures refer to what was previously the Federal Republic of Germany.

[3] OECD standardised rates are not available for Denmark and Luxembourg. Similar harmonised rates compiled by the Statistical Office of the European Community (SOEC) are shown for these countries.
*Note:* There are currently no comparable rates available for Greece.
Source: OECD "Main Economic Indicators".
EUROSTAT "Unemployment Bulletins".

## Tobacco Industries

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the tobacco industries in each standard region *(a)* in 1979, *(b)* in 1985, *(c)* in 1990 and *(d)* currently.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Information for the tobacco industry is only available for census of employment dates. The available information is in the table:

*Employees in employment in the tobacco industry*

*Thousands*

| *Standard region* | [1] *June 1978* | [2] *September 1984* | [2] *September 1989* |
|---|---|---|---|
| South east (including Greater London) | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Greater London | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| East Anglia | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| South West | 7 | 3 | 1 |
| West Midlands | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| East Midlands | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| North West | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| North | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Wales | 1 | 1 | Scotland |
| 3 | | | |
| 1 | 1 | | |

[1] 1968 standard industrial classification (SIC), minimum list heading 240.
[2] 1980 standard industrial classification, activity heading 4290.

## Unfair Dismissal

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment of successful unfair dismissal claims during each of the last five years for which records are available, how many and what percentage in each category of claim resulted in monetary awards and in recommendations for reinstatement or re-engagement, respectively; of the monetary awards, what was the maximum and the average thereof; and of recommendations for re-engagement or reinstatement, how many and what percentage were complied with.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I regret that the information on monetary awards and reinstatement and re-engagement orders is not available in precisely the form requested. The tables show the number of cases where a monetary award was made and the median award for each financial year. We have no information on the total number of reinstatement or re-engagement orders which were complied with, but the information available on the number of additional awards made where an employer has not complied is given.

*Monetary awards: all unfair dismissal cases*

| *Year* | *Number* | *Percentage of cases proceeding to hearing* | *Median award £* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 1,290 | 21·3 | 1,773 |
| 1989-90 | 1,310 | 22·3 | 1,786 |
| 1988-89 | 1,272 | 22·0 | 1,732 |
| 1987-88 | 1,352 | 18·4 | 1,865 |
| 1986-87 | 2,277 | 24·5 | 1,676 |

*Reinstatement/Re-engagement Orders: all unfair dismissal cases*

| *Year* | *Number of reinstatement/ re-engagement orders* | *Percentage of cases proceeding to hearing* | *Number of additional awards* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 63 | 1·0 | 35 |
| 1989-90 | 59 | 1·0 | n.a. |
| 1988-89 | 58 | 1·0 | n.a. |
| 1987-88 | 83 | 1·1 | n.a. |
| 1986-87 | 103 | 1·1 | n.a. |

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional awards for failure to comply with recommendations for re-engagement or reinstatement following successful unfair dismissal claims were made during each of the last five years for which records are available.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I regret that the information requested is not available prior to the financial year 1990-91. In the year 1990-91, industrial tribunals made 35 additional awards.

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list *(a)* the current number of appeals for unfair dismissal in each district in the United Kingdom, *(b)* the length of waiting-time prior to appeals being heard and *(c)* the staff in full-time equivalent employed in each employment office; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* I am replying in respect of Great Britain only. Questions relating to Northern Ireland are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The figures in the first table relate to the number of cases which are ready for listing, or which have been listed for hearing, for all jurisdictions for each of the regional offices of the industrial tribunals in England and Wales and for Scotland as a whole. I regret that figures are not available for cases which have not reached that stage. Nor are separate figures available for unfair dismissal, but in general some 60 per cent. of applications to industrial tribunals are in respect of unfair dismissal. The figures for Scotland in the two other tables cover both the central office in Glasgow and local offices.

*Cases listed/ready for listing*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| *England and Wales* | |
| Birmingham | 1,795 |
| Bristol | 385 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 1,390 |
| Cardiff | 569 |
| Leeds | 1,314 |
| London North | 1,453 |
| London South | 1,823 |
| Manchester | 2,082 |
| Newcastle | 529 |
| Nottingham | 1,272 |
| Southampton | 1,335 |
| *Scotland* | 2,546 |

*Length of time for registered applications to come to first hearing*

| | Percentage under (weeks) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *6* | *8* | *10* | *12* | *16* | *20* | *26* |
| *England and Wales* | | | | | | | |
| Birmingham | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 17 | 34 |
| Bristol | 5 | 18 | 42 | 54 | 72 | 83 | 92 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 27 | 61 |
| Cardiff | 0 | 0 | 7 | 16 | 23 | 49 | 68 |
| Leeds | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 50 | 71 | 89 |
| London North | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 14 | 26 | 43 |
| London South | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 32 | 56 |
| Manchester | 0 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 14 | 20 | 53 |
| Newcastle | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 15 | 36 | 66 |
| Nottingham | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 5 |
| Southampton | 0 | 2 | 6 | 11 | 30 | 53 | 81 |
| *Scotland* | | | | | | | |
| Aberdeen | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 58 |
| Dumfries | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 | 78 | 89 |
| Dundee | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 30 | 93 |
| Edinburgh | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 75 | 89 |
| Glasgow | 1 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 63 | 85 | 92 |
| Inverness | 0 | 0 | 0 | 29 | 57 | 57 | 71 |

*Administrative staff in post at 31 May 1992*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| *England and Wales* | |
| Birmingham | 33·0 |
| Bristol | 21·0 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 20·0 |
| Cardiff | 22·5 |
| Leeds | 32·0 |
| London North | 39·0 |
| London South | 54·5 |
| Manchester | 48·0 |
| Newcastle | 20·5 |
| Nottingham | 19·5 |
| Southampton | 22·5 |
| *Scotland* | |
| Aberdeen | 3·3 |
| Dundee | 3·1 |
| Edinburgh | 5·5 |
| Glasgow | [1]28·9 |

[1] Including headquarters staff.

*Note:*

The hearing centres at Dumfries and Inverness are staffed from the Glasgow and Aberdeen offices.

## Unfair Dismissal

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the number of applications for appeal against unfair dismissal made to each employment office in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* I am replying in respect of Great Britain only. Questions relating to Northern Ireland are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The figures show the number of registered applications to industrial tribunals in respect of the principal jurisdictions relating to unfair dismissal for each of the regional offices of the industrial tribunals (England and Wales) and the central office of the industrial tribunals (Scotland) for the year ended 31 March 1992.

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Birmingham | 3,795 |
| Bristol | 2,059 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 3,352 |
| Cardiff | 2,412 |
| Leeds | 3,643 |
| London North | 3,581 |
| London South | 5,219 |
| Manchester | 6,055 |
| Newcastle | 1,913 |
| Nottingham | 2,397 |
| Southampton | 3,060 |
| Scotland | 3,388 |

## Employment Action Programme

**Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the level of support from the trades unions for the employment action programme.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I do not know what level of support there is among trade unions for what is essentially a locally delivered programme. I would hope, however, that those who are truly concerned with helping unemployed people will be working to ensure that the programme is made available to all who would benefit from it.

## Sheep Dips

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been carried out into the risks from the inhalation of organo-phosphorous sheep dips; and if she will make it her policy to amend the recommended safety clothing to include face masks.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out a pilot research project in the south-west of England in 1990 to look for evidence of personal exposure to sheep dip. HSE has also commissioned a research project to carry out an occupational hygiene assessment of sheep dipping practices and processes.

In addition, the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) has asked sheep dip manufacturers to carry out a number of further studies as part of its current review of sheep dip product licences. These include studies of farm operators —including blood tests and details of protective clothing worn—and studies to show which area of the bodies of operators are most exposed. These will then be considered by the VPC in formulating its advice to the Licensing Authority.

Protective clothing requirements will be one of the areas covered by the VPC in its review. Currently, the wearing of a face shield is only required when handling the sheep dip concentrate.

## General National Vocational Qualification

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which schools and colleges are intending to pilot the new GNVQ post-16 courses in September.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** As at 26 June 1992, around 90 schools and colleges plan to participate in the first phase of the implementation of GNVQ post-16 courses in September this year. The schools and colleges are located throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The following is the full list of schools and colleges but may be subject to minor variation between now and September.

*List of centres for September 1992 GNVQ implementation (as at 26 June)*
*Each centre will offer GNVQs through one awarding body, either BTEC, C and G or RSA*

| *Centre* | *Area* |
|---|---|
| Airedale and Wharfdale college/Kitson college consortium | Leeds |
| Alcester grammar school | Alcester, Warwickshire |
| Amersham and Wycombe college (FE) | High Wycombe |
| Barnfield college | Luton, Bedfordshire |
| Barnsley college | Barnsley, Yorkshire |
| Belfast consortium: Belfast Institute of FE and HE, St. Patrick's secondary school | Belfast |
| Bilston community college (FE) | Wolverhampton |
| Bishop Douglass school | Finchley, North London |
| Blackburn college | Lancashire |
| Blackpool and Fylde college/Wigan and Leigh consortium | Blackpool |
| Blue school (The) | Wells, Somerset |
| Builth Wells high school | Powys |
| Bury metropolitan college | Lancashire |
| Buxton community school | Buxton, Derbyshire |
| Calderdale college of FE | Halifax |
| Castle high school | Deal, Kent |
| Castlereagh college/Lagan college | Belfast, HI |
| Coventry technical college | Coventry |
| Crawley college | West Sussex |
| Driffield school | North Humberside |
| East Sussex consortium Lewes college/ Bexhill college/Cardinal Newman school/Uplands community school | East Sussex |
| Eastbourne college of arts and technology | Eastbourne, East Sussex |
| Ellen Wilkinson highschool | West London |
| Farnborough college of technology | Hampshire |
| Farnham college 6th form | Farnham, Surrey |
| Ferndown upper school | Dorset |
| Gateshead college | Gateshead |
| Gloucestershire college of arts and technology | Gloucestershire |
| Gorseinon college | Swansea, Wales |
| Greenhead college (6th form college) | Huddersfield |
| Greenhill college | Harrow, Middlesex |
| Guildford college/Kingston college consortium | Surrey |
| Gyfun Ysgol | Bargoed, Mid Glamorgan |
| Henley college | Coventry |
| Hertfordshire LEA consortium/ Hertford regional college/North Herts college/Oaklands college | Hertfordshire |
| Hirst high school | Northumberland |
| Hull college of FE | Hull |
| John Ruskin (6th form college) | South Croydon |
| Josiah Mason college (6th form college) | Birmingham |
| Kingshurst CTC | Birmingham |
| Leigh CTC | Kent |
| Lliswerry school | Newport |
| Lord Williams school | Oxon |
| Lytchett Minster school | Dorset |
| Manchester college of arts and technology | Manchester |
| Matthew Boulton/Wakefield district college consortium | Birmingham/Wakefield |
| Mid Kent college of HE and FE | Maidstone, Kent |
| Minsthorpe high school | Wakefield |
| Monkswearmouth college | Sunderland |
| Mortimer Wilson school | Derbyshire |
| N East London college | Haringey, London N1 |
| Nelson Tomlinson school | Wigton, Cumbria |
| Newcastle CAT | Newcastle Upon Tyne |
| North Lindsay college | Scunthorpe |
| Nottinghamshire college of FE (schools consortium) | Mansfield, Notts. |
| NWIHFE consortium: NW Inst. of FE and HE, Foyle and Londonderry, Thornhill colleges, St. Marys, St. Cec | Londonderry |
| Parkwood/Loxley college consortium | Sheffield |
| Peterlee college | Durham |
| Plymouth college of FE | Devon |
| Portsmouth 6th form college | Portsmouth |
| Purbeck school | Dorset |
| Queen Elizabeth's school | Dorset |
| Queens Park community school | London NW6 |
| Samuel Whitbread school | Bedfordshire |
| Sandwell college | W. Midlands |
| Scarborough technical college | N. Yorkshire |
| Sherburn high school | N. Yorkshire |
| St. Andrews school | Surrey |
| St. Brendans 6th form college | Bristol |
| St. Chads school | Cheshire |
| St. Charles catholic school | W. London |
| St. Peters school | Dorset |
| St. Helens community/ South Manchester/ Wirral Metropolitan college consortium | North West |
| Stamford college FE | Stamford, Lincs |
| Stantonbury Campus | Milton Keynes |
| Stockton-Billingham technical college | Billingham |
| Sutton high school | Liverpool |
| Swanwick Hall school | Derbyshire |
| Tamar Valley consortium Eggbuckland, Estover, Lipson, St. Bonifaces colleges/Southway and Tamarside schools | Plymouth, Devon |
| Tewkesbury school | Gloucestershire |
| Walsall TVEI consortium Bluecoat, Manor Farm Schools, Walsall colleges of art and technology | West Midlands |
| Weatherhead high school | Merseyside |
| West Nottinghamshire college of FE | Mansfield, Nottinghamshire |
| Whitby Co high school | Wirral |
| Whitby school | N. Yorkshire |
| Witham 6th form | Essex |
| WJEC (schools consortium) BridgendNewport, Pembrokeshire and Pontypridd colleges | Wales |
| Wootton Bassett school | Wiltshire |
| York school | Carlisle, Cumbria |

## Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action she will be taking in response to the open letter sent to her by the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Government will continue to create the right conditions for a prosperous and growing economy. Statutory wage fixing, advocated by the

Manchester Low Pay Unit, distorts the labour market and damages employment prospects, particularly those of women and part-time workers.

### Earnings

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list for each travel-to-work area or the smallest area available the average gross weekly earnings of full-time *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* all persons as a percentage of the United Kingdom average at the nearest dates to June 1984, November 1984, June 1990 and the latest available date, respectively.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Details of earnings for men and women in the counties of England and Wales and the regions of Scotland can be found in tables 110 and 113 of part E of the new earnings survey. The corresponding sample numbers can also be found in the same tables, enabling combined estimates for men and women to be produced. To enable estimates to be made of earnings in the United Kingdom, information on earnings and sample numbers for Northern Ireland can be found in tables 1 and 3 respectively of the Northern Ireland report. Copies of both reports for April of each year are available in the Library.

### Offshore Safety (Protection Against Victimisation) Act 1992

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent discussions she has had on the implementation of the Offshore Safety (Protection Against Victimisation) Act 1992.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** This Act became law on 16 March. It is for individuals who believe that their rights under the Act have been infringed to seek redress by making a complaint to an industrial tribunal.

### Social Affairs Council

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the outcome of the meeting on 24 June of the Social Affairs Council in Luxembourg; and if she will make a statement.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** The Council devoted most of its time to consideration of the working time directive, but the Council did not reach a common position, nor was a vote taken.

I made it clear that the United Kingdom continues to have very severe doubts about the directive as a whole and about its proposed legal base and that we reserved the right to challenge it in the European Court of Justice. In the discussions of the text, the United Kingdom secured all its key objectives, namely: the right for employees to work more than 48 hours per week if they choose to do so, freedom for each member state to decide whether to allow working on a Sunday, and the right of employers and employees to make collective agreements at local level concerning working time in a manner which best suits their particular circumstances—to derogate from the terms of any eventual directive. The United Kingdom also secured other helpful points.

However, other member states continued to have difficulties with the proposal, and the Council decided that further work on various aspects of the directive was necessary before the issue could return to Ministers.

On the draft directive concerning pregnant workers, one member state continued to oppose the common position which the Council reached last November and which the other 11 countries—including the United Kingdom—now wish to see adopted finally.

A number of useful proposals were, however, agreed or adopted, including directives on health and safety in mines and quarries and on temporary and mobile construction sites; a directive on collective redundancies; a directive on safety signs at work; a decision that 1993 should be European Year of the Elderly; and recommendations on employee financial participation, on aspects of social security systems.

The outcome on the working time directive was a very good one for the United Kingdom. It also showed that proposed EC legislation of this sort causes difficulties for a number of member states. More generally, progress continues to be made on other more sensible proposals under the social action programme. Of the 38 proposals brought forward to date, 25 have now been agreed.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 1 July 1992*

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Maxwell Arrests

**Mr. John Morris:** To ask the Attorney-General what principles the director of the Serious Fraud Office applies on the execution of a warrant for arrest; and whether he will make a statement on the arrest of Mr. Ian Maxwell and Mr. Kevin Maxwell.

**The Attorney-General:** It is the policy of the Serious Fraud Office to procure the arrest of persons suspected of serious fraud with the assistance of the police. The process of arrest is an operational matter for the police who will decide questions of timing, whereabouts and related matters as part of their operational duties. Where police are conducting investigations in conjunction with the Serious Fraud Office, they may be advised, but not directed, on such matters by the SFO. Such advice will have regard to the seriousness of the alleged offences, the need to secure evidence at the time of the arrest and any circumstances material to the risk that a suspect may seek to abscond, including the likelihood that such suspect may have the means and ability to do so and to support himself outside the jurisdiction. Each case will be considered impartially on its merits.

Ian Maxwell, Kevin Maxwell and Larry Trachtenburg were arrested without warrant on suspicion of having committed the offences for which they have subsequently been charged. Similar principles govern both the execution of warrants of arrest issued by the courts and arrest without warrant.

### De Lorean Cars

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to the remarks of Lord Justice Murray at Belfast Crown Court last week in relation to Fred Bushell, the late Colin Chapman and John de Lorean; what obstacles stand in the way of extraditing Mr. De Lorean from the United States of America to face charges in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**The Attorney-General:** My attention has been drawn to the remarks of Lord Justice Murray in the course of sentencing Federick Bushell at the conclusion of his trial. These followed a joint investigation by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Serious Fraud Office. Frederick Bushell resided and was arrested in the United Kingdom.

Although the Royal Ulster Constabulary holds a warrant for the arrest of Mr. De Lorean for conspiracy to defraud, I am advised that the laws of the United States provide a limitation period after which extradition is not normally possible. Although the period varies depending on the offence alleged, the period in this case expired before the Serious Fraud Office was created. It was the Serious Fraud Office investigation which produced the evidence justifying the obtaining of the warrant against Mr. De Lorean.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**The Attorney-General:** Proposals for market testing relating to the Departments for which I am responsible are being considered and an announcement will be made later in the year. Any relevant information will be made available, subject to the need to protect commercial confidentiality.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Attorney-General what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**The Attorney-General:** In 1991 the Crown prosecution service contracted out its headquarters reprographic operation at a saving of around £90,000 per year. No other estimates have been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Attorney-General what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**The Attorney-General:** The cost is £15,500.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Asylum

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional places he has provided for the purposes of detaining applicants for asylum; and where these places are located.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** New accommodation, providing about 300 additional places for detention under Immigration Act powers, will be delivered in phases from September 1992 to spring 1995, and will be located at Harmondsworth, Gatwick airport, Kidlington in Oxford and Stansted airport.

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer on 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *193-94*, if he will list the organisations with which he has held meetings in connection with proposed legislation on asylum applications.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I have discussed legislation on asylum at meetings with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Amnesty International and Westminster city council. My right hon. and learned Friend and I are ready to hear the views of interested organisations.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** A provisional programme of areas of work to be market tested in my Department in 1992-93 has been drawn up and promulgated to Home Office staff. As promised in the White Paper "Competing for Quality", departmental targets for market testing in 1992-93 will be announced later this year.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department wht estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The purpose of the market-testing programme is to test by competition the value for money represented by the present arrangements for undertaking activities and thereby to identify and introduce more effective arrangements. No estimate of likely savings has yet been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The cost of the market-testing initiative in my Department from November 1991 to June 1992 is £150,000.

### Racism

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's position on reducing racism and xenophobia in Europe.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The Government abhor all manifestations of racism and support all the practical steps taken by member states to counter this. We were very pleased to support the European Council declaration on racism and xenophobia agreed at Maastricht in December 1991.

### Metropolitan Police (Accidents)

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of how many accidents involving Metropolitan police vehicles and third parties have been reported for each year since 1985; and on how many occasions in each year the Metropolitan police were held to be liable for the accidents.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information is not held in the form requested.

### Shamrock Farms

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection on Shamrock Farms; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has received no representations from the BUAV on Shamrock Farms to date.

### Expatriate Voters

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the basis on which expatriate voters were allocated to each constituency.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Overseas electors are registered in the constituency in which they were last registered as electors before leaving the United Kingdom. If they left the country before they were old enough to vote, they are registered in the constituency in which a parent or guardian was registered at the time they left the country.

### Animals (Scientific Procedures)

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it a policy to extend minimal standards of care and accommodation as set out in the code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures to all suppliers of animals;

(2) what minimum standards primate traders must meet to be licensed by his office; what are the dimensions of the smallest cage British primate suppliers may legally use; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** It is already the practice of the Home Office animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate to seek compliance by designated suppliers with the standards of care and accommodation set out in the Laboratory Animal Breeders Association's guidelines on the care and housing of animals bred for scientific purposes. There is therefore a recognised standard against which such establishments can be assessed.

The recommended minimum size of cage is determined by the weight of the primate to be housed. The smallest cage size recommended by the LABA guidelines is for animals up to 700g in weight. The minimum recommended height for such animals is 100 cm, and the minimum recommended floor area is 1,200 sq cm per animal when the animals are housed in groups, or 2,500 sq cm when they are housed singly.

**Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names of all British primate suppliers and for each the number of primates which *(a)* were dead upon their arrival to Britain, *(b)* died before reaching British research laboratories and *(c)* were slaughtered before research was undertaken.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Home Office does not hold information on the number of primates imported into Great Britain which are dead on arrival or which have died before reaching British research laboratories.

Figures on the number of primates humanely killed after receipt and before use are not collated centrally. The humane killing of primates in British research laboratories in such circumstances is known to be uncommon, but might take place, for example, to terminate suffering from otherwise untreatable disease.

It is not our practice to give details of individual establishments designated under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

### Naturalisation

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outstanding backlog of naturalisation applications as at 1 January 1990, 1991, and 1992 and for the most recent available date; and what is the current rate at which applications are being cleared.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The numbers of outstanding applications for naturalisation on the dates referred to were as follows:

| | [1] Applications awaiting allocation | Allocated applications |
|---|---|---|
| 1 January 1990 | 2,914 | 64,930 |
| 1 January 1991 | 1,645 | 62,949 |
| 1 January 1992 | 6,266 | 38,382 |
| 1 June 1992 | 582 | 43,569 |

[1] It is not possible at this stage to distinguish beween applications for naturalisation and those for registration.

These cases are currently being cleared at the rate of around 2,600 per month.

### Operation Container

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he now expects Operation Container to end in Greater Manchester;

(2) how much Operation Container has so far cost; and what is his estimate of its final cost.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Since April 1990, the total payment made to the Greater Manchester police for holding prisoners in police cells has been £40,121,851·19. This figure does not include payments for Manchester prisoners held by other police forces, information on which was not collected separately. As has been explained to the hon. Member, while the ending of the police cells problem is a matter of the highest priority for the prison service, it is not possible to say exactly when Operation Container will no longer be required or the final cost.

## TRANSPORT

### National Exhibition Centre

**Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the likely completion date of the proposed dedicated access road and signalling system from the M42 to the national exhibition centre; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The contract for the construction of the improved access road from the southway exit of the national exhibition centre to the M42 slip road is due to be let very shortly. This should enable it to be open in time for the motor show in late October. Improvements to the roundabout at the intersection of the A45 and the M42, including the provision of further traffic signals and the widening of the approaches to the roundabout, are currently being designed in detail. These should be completed summer 1993. Together with the other improvements which we have in hand at and around this intersection, access to and from the NEC and the other important facilities in the area will be easier.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Norris:** Following the publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" in which a new market testing initiative was announced, the efficiency unit will announce the programme for all departments later this year. All relevant information will be made public.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total cost so far of the market testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Norris:** The identified cost since November 1991, mainly consultants' fees, amounts to some £10,000. Other expenditure involving the salaries of civil servants is not kept in a suitable form and ascertaining what it might be could be achieved only at disproportionate cost.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market testing programme.

**Mr. Norris:** Since 1986-87 the total estimated savings made to date as a result of the market testing programme amount to approximately £7·3 million.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Key:** The Department of National Heritage is still in the process of being set-up and the information to answer this qestion is not yet centrally available.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Key:** The numbers and percentage of women in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are as follows:—

| Grade | Number of officers | Number of women | Percentage of women |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | — | 0 |
| 2 | — | — | — |
| 3 | 3 | 1 | 33 |
| 4 | 1 | — | 0 |
| 5 | 15 | 4 | 26 |
| 6 | 3 | 1 | 33 |
| 7 | 46 | 10 | 21 |

The figures for staff in post are for the latest available date. The figures for officers in other grades are not yet centrally available as the Department is still in the process of being set up; this includes setting up the central personnel and manpower planning function.

### Hyde Park (Traffic)

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what guidance he has issued to the authorities responsible for Hyde park as to the parking arrangements admissible for coaches in connection with demonstrations and marches in order to ensure the free flow of normal traffic in the surrounding streets.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* That the organisers be asked to make arrangements with the public transport authorities to use public transport to get to and

from the park whenever possible to avoid unnecessary disruption in local streets. When coaches have to be used it is recommended that they liaise with the police to organise transfers on to the London public transport system before reaching central London; and as a last resort, arrangements be made for coaches to park at agreed locations close to the park. The possible disruption to traffic and local residents is a key factor in early discussions with organisers before any event takes place.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* My Department is in the process of appointing a consultant to assist in preparing its market testing programme.

### Bushy Park

**Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set out the opening hours on weekdays and Sundays of the woodland garden in Bushy park; whether the park contractors are obliged to comply with these hours; if he will state why the gates were not open by 9.45 am on Sunday 31 May; and what action will be taken to prevent a recurrence.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The woodland garden in Bushy park opens at 9 am seven days a week. It closes at dusk.

Contractors are obliged to unlock the gates at the stated time. This is a scheduled item within the ground maintenance contract.

Due to an oversight on the part of the contractor a member of his staff was not available to open the gates at the required time on Sunday 31 May 1992.

The contractor was financially penalised for failure to comply with the contract and subsequently gave assurances that it would not happen again. It has now been agreed with the contractor that in order to make sure all gates are open by 9 am he will start unlocking earlier than hitherto.

The client duty officer for the day has also been instructed to pay particular attention to the contractor's performance in this area and report any lapse to the park superintendent.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Ozone Layer

**Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest estimate of the average depletion of the ozone layer on an annualised basis *(a)* at British latitudes and *(b)* at all latitudes; and what are the projections of the extent of depletion over the period 2000 to 2050.

**Mr. Maclean:** The latest estimates of ozone layer depletion remain substantially the same as published in the 1991 report of the Department's stratospheric ozone review group, copies of which are in the Library. Ozone depletion at British latitudes is at a maximum in the early spring, averaging 0·8 per cent. per year. Ozone levels recover substantially during the summer. The annual average depletion taken over all latitudes is about 0·3 per cent. per year—we do not have an equivalent figure for British latitudes. The extent of ozone depletion in future years will depend on how the Montreal protocol controls are tightened, but the review group estimate that under the present controls the potential for ozone depletion will increase until at least 1997, and then decline slowly over the next century.

### Marsham Street Offices

**Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *694*, what is his timetable for demolishing the Marsham street Government offices.

**Mr. Howard:** The planning and development consultants, whose appointment was announced in the answer of 19 June, have just started work. Their advice will assist in identifying the best alternative uses for the site at 2 Marsham street and thereby in establishing a timetable for the reuse of the site. Until that is established I cannot be precise on the timing of demolition.

### Homelessness

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons were registered as homeless in the London borough of Newham for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Baldry:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *569-70*.

### Paris Commission

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the United Kingdom will be represented at the 21 and 22 September meeting of the Paris commission.

**Mr. Maclean:** I shall be representing the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at this meeting, together with officials from my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which substances the United Kingdom expects to agree completely to eliminate from discharges to water in the United Kingdom, at or as a result of the 21 and 22 September meeting of the Paris commission.

**Mr. Maclean:** None.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on proposals from other countries regarding the complete elimination of certain substances in discharges to water, at or as a result of the 21 and 22 meeting of the Paris commission.

**Mr. Maclean:** The major business of the meeting is the agreement of a new convention concerning the protection of the marine environment in the north-east Atlantic which will replace the existing Oslo and Paris conventions. There are also a number of recommendations to be considered, but none calls for the complete elimination of substances in discharges to water.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the United Kingdom has made in eliminating discharges to water of substances controlled under agreements of the Paris commission; and if he will publish such data.

**Mr. Maclean:** The United Kingdom has made good progress in implementing Paris commission decisions and recommendations. At the ministerial meeting of the Oslo and Paris commissions being held in September a number of reports will be published on their activities and these will give details of the data submitted by the United Kingdom.

### Air Quality

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of *(a)* motor cars, *(b)* lorries and *(c)* buses on air quality in (i) urban and (ii) rural areas.

**Mr. Maclean:** Motor traffic is a growing source of urban and rural air pollution, and much action is already in hand to tackle it. The current position is conveniently summarised in the air quality chapter of the Department's annual "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics". A copy of the latest volume has been placed in the Library of the House. In addition, the Royal Commission on environmental pollution reported in September 1991 on emissions from heavy duty diesel vehicles.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Howard:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *102*.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Howard:** The full cost of the market testing initiative in my Department since November 1991 is estimated at £223,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Howard:** No such estimate has yet been made.

### United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any Government Ministers or officials attended any of the half-day round table meetings sponsored by UNESCO at the recent United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**Mr. Maclean:** No.

### Inner Cities Religious Council

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Inner Cities Religious Council will hold its first formal meeting; and what its purpose and membership will be.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The first formal meeting of the Inner Cities Religious Council will take place on Monday 20 July. Members will be drawn from the Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim anhd Sikh faiths, under my chairmanship.

The Inner Cities Religious Council will allow representatives of the faith communities to discuss policy and practical issues with Government and each other. It will give consideration to the needs of communities in inner cities and deprived urban areas, and the assistance available to meet them, and will also seek to create opportunities for action in such areas involving faith communities in partnership with other local residents, business, voluntary organisations and local and central Government.

### Relocation

**Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in negotiations about his Department's move to Docklands since his oral answers of 2 June, *Official Report*, columns 707-13.

**Mr. Howard:** My Department's advisers are continuing to negotiate in respect of Harbour Exchange, East India Dock and Canary Wharf. In the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *150*, I said that a fourth docklands development at Thomas More square, Wapping had been ruled out on the ground of cost. However, the owners of Thomas More square have now sought my agreement to be allowed to enter into the negotiations on the same terms as the other three contenders in docklands. I have agreed that they may do so.

### County Hall, London

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has considered relocating staff from Marsham street to County hall.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 26 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 2 June to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), *Official Report*, column *368*. In the light of that answer, I am not considering the relocation of staff to County hall.

### Recycling

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 13 May, *Official Report*, column *126*, to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) when the commissioned study into the use of economic instruments to promote recycling will be published.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* We expect to receive the final version of the study shortly. I will then discuss the next steps with my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade, whose Department is co-sponsoring the study.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Public Record Office

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce a citizen's charter for the Public Record Office.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** There are no plans to introduce a charter for the Public Record Office, though the office has published its quality of service and efficiency targets.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The total cost of the market testing initiative in my Department since November 1991 is estimated to have been £139,300.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992, at column *102*.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Market testing in the former Management and Personnel Office and in the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service is estimated to have saved some £290,000 in cash terms between 1986-87 and 1991-92.

### Land Holdings

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 15 June to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), *Official Report*, columns *360-61*, if he will list each individual land or property holding of the Duchy, together with its location and capital value.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It would be impractical to list each individual land and property holding belonging to the Duchy, which amount to over 1,000. A summary of land and property holdings is therefore set out.

There are estates predominately agricultural in nature, in the following counties:

| | *Approximate acreage* |
|---|---|
| Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire | 3,031 |
| Staffordshire and Cheshire | 10,901 |
| Lancashire | 10,617 |
| Yorkshire | 8,111 |

In addition, the Duchy owns some 15,000 acres of moorland in north Yorkshire and south Wales, most of which are subject to common rights.

The estates include some 273 agricultural tenancies and 3,696 acres of woodland.

Other property ownerships (all of which are freehold except for a long leasehold property in the City of London) may be summarised as follows:

*(a) Greater London*
The freehold of properties in the Manor of the Savoy bounded by Lancaster place, the Embankment, Savoy hill and Strand, including the Savoy chapel, and a building at 2/4 Lancaster place to 137 Strand.

*(b)* Miscellaneous commercial properties in Harrogate which include five shops, 2 hotels and a house now converted to offices. These properties, in the main, are let on occupational leases. There is also the remainder of a residential estate developed over a period of 100 years or so producing 36 ground rents. The freehold reversions are sold to the lessees on terms which follow the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Acts.

*(c)* Single holdings—those not forming part of an estate—of commercial property in Hadley Wood, Leicester, Lewes and London, other than the Savoy estate. Except for four properties in London which are let on ground rents, these are let on occupational leases.

On the question of capital value, the Duchy values its properties for internal purposes only and figures are not published.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Top Salaries Review Body

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage increase and actual size in pounds per week, in pay for each main group covered by the Top Salaries Review Body for each year since 1979; and what the comparable figures were for an employee on national average earnings for each of those years.

**Mr. Portillo:** The information requested is set out in the table.

*£ per week*

| | *1979* | *1980* | | *1981* | | *1982* | | *1983* | | *1984* | | *1985* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* | *per cent. increase* | *£* |
| Average Earnings[1] | 89·60 | 23·0 | 110·20 | 13·3 | 124·90 | 9·3 | 136·50 | 8·6 | 148·30 | 7·4 | 159·30 | 7·3 | 171·00 |
| Senior Civil Servants | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Head of the Civil Service | 593·87 | 8·1 | 641·76 | 7·0 | 686·69 | 17·2 | 804·60 | 14·3 | 919·54 | 6·8 | 981·80 | 46·3 | 1,436·78 |
| Permanent Secretary to the Treasury | 593·87 | 8·1 | 641·76 | 7·0 | 686·69 | 17·2 | 804·60 | 14·3 | 919·54 | 6·8 | 981·80 | 36·6 | 1,341·00 |
| Grade 1 | 545·98 | 8·8 | 593·88 | 7·0 | 635·44 | 13·8 | 723·18 | 13·2 | 818·97 | 6·4 | 871·65 | 31·9 | 1,149·43 |
| Grade 1A | 498·08 | 9·6 | 545·98 | 7·0 | 584·19 | 14·8 | 670·50 | 12·9 | 756·70 | 6·3 | 804·60 | 31·0 | 1,053·64 |

| | 1979 £ | 1980 per cent. increase | £ | 1981 per cent. increase | £ | 1982 per cent. increase | £ | 1983 per cent. increase | £ | 1984 per cent. increase | £ | 1985 per cent. increase | £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| range minimum[2] | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 766·28 |
| range maximum | 431·03 | 8·9 | 469·35 | 7·0 | 502·20 | 15·4 | 579·50 | 13·2 | 656·13 | 6·6 | 699·23 | 15·1 | 804·60 |
| Grade 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| range minimum[2] | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 593·87 |
| range maximum | 344·83 | 13·9 | 392·72 | 7·0 | 420·21 | 14·0 | 478·93 | 11·0 | 531·61 | 6·3 | 565·13 | 15·3 | 651·34 |
| Senior Officers of the Armed Forces | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Admiral of the Fleet<br>Field Marshal<br>Marshal of the Royal Air Force | 593·87 | 8·1 | 641·76 | 7·0 | 686·69 | 17·2 | 804·60 | 14·3 | 919·54 | 6·8 | 981·80 | 46·3 | 1,436·78 |
| Admiral<br>General<br>Air Chief Marshal | 545·98 | 8·8 | 593·88 | 7·0 | 635·44 | 13·8 | 723·18 | 13·2 | 818·97 | 6·4 | 871·65 | 31·9 | 1,149·43 |
| Vice Admiral<br>Lieutenant General<br>Air Marshal | 431·03 | 8·9 | 469·35 | 7·0 | 502·20 | 15·4 | 579·50 | 13·2 | 656·13 | 6·6 | 699·23 | 15·1 | 804·60 |
| Rear Admiral<br>Major General<br>Air Vice-Marshal | 344·83 | 13·9 | 392·72 | 7·0 | 420·21 | 14·0 | 478·93 | 11·0 | 531·61 | 6·3 | 565·13 | 15·3 | 651·34 |
| Members of the Judiciary[3] | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lord Chief Justice | 708·81 | 8·1 | 766·28 | 11·3 | 852·49 | 18·0 | 1,005·75 | 14·3 | 1,149·43 | 6·7 | 1,226·05 | 17·2 | 1,436·78 |
| Lords of Appeal | 651·34 | 8·8 | 708·81 | 10·8 | 785·44 | 17·7 | 924·33 | 14·0 | 1,053·64 | 6·4 | 1,120·69 | 17·9 | 1,321·84 |
| Lords Justices of Appeal | 593·87 | 8·1 | 641·76 | 11·9 | 718·39 | 21·3 | 871·65 | 14·3 | 996·17 | 6·7 | 1,063·22 | 18·9 | 1,264·37 |
| High Court Judges | 545·98 | 12·3 | 613·03 | 9·4 | 670·50 | 21·4 | 814·18 | 12·9 | 919·54 | 6·8 | 981·80 | 17·1 | 1,149·42 |
| Senior Circuit Judges | 387·39 | 11·3 | 431·03 | 8·9 | 469·35 | 18·4 | 555·56 | 12·9 | 627·39 | 6·9 | 670·50 | 27·1 | 852·49 |
| Circuit Judges | 373·56 | 12·8 | 421·46 | 5·7 | 445·40 | 19·4 | 531·61 | 11·7 | 593·87 | 6·5 | 632·18 | 21·2 | 766·28 |
| District Judges | 330·46 | 11·6 | 368·77 | 6·5 | 392·72 | 17·1 | 459·77 | 11·5 | 512·45 | 6·5 | 545·98 | 7·0 | 584·29 |

£ per week

| | 1986 per cent. increase | 1987 £ | per cent. increase | 1988 £ | per cent. increase | 1989 £ | per cent. increase | 1990 £ | per cent. increase | 1991 £ | per cent. increase | £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average Earnings[1] | 8·0 | 184·70 | 7·7 | 198·90 | 9·8 | 218·40 | 9·7 | 239·70 | 9·8 | 263·10 | 8·2 | 284·70 |
| Senior Civil Servants | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Head of the Civil Service | 3·2 | 1,482·76 | 4·7 | 1,551·72 | 5·2 | 1,633·14 | 5·0 | 1,714·56 | 7·0 | 1,834·29 | 9·4 | 2,006·70 |
| Permanent Secretary to the Treasury | 3·4 | 1,386·97 | 4·6 | 1,451·15 | 5·3 | 1,527·78 | 5·0 | 1,604·41 | 6·9 | 1,714·56 | 9·5 | 1,877·39 |
| Grade 1 | 3·5 | 1,189·66 | 4·7 | 1,245·21 | 5·4 | 1,312·26 | 5·1 | 1,379·31 | 6·9 | 1,475·10 | 9·4 | 1,613·98 |
| Grade 1A | 3·3 | 1,088·12 | 4·8 | 1,139·85 | 5·5 | 1,202·11 | 5·2 | 1,264·37 | 7·2 | 1,355·36 | 9·5 | 1,484·67 |
| Grade 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| range minimum[2] | 3·8 | 795·02 | 4·8 | 833·33 | 5·3 | 877·39 | 5·0 | 921·46 | 14·1 | 1,051·72 | 9·5 | 1,151·34 |
| range maximum | 19·4 | 833·33 | 7·7 | 1,034·73 | 5·6 | 1,091·95 | 4·9 | 1,145·59 | 7·5 | 1,231·80 | 9·5 | 1,348·66 |
| Grade 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| range minimum[2] | 4·4 | 619·73 | 5·1 | 651·34 | 5·3 | 685·82 | 5·0 | 720·31 | 16·5 | 839·08 | 9·6 | 919·54 |
| range maximum | 17·6 | 766·38 | 7·5 | 823·75 | 5·3 | 867·82 | 5·1 | 911·88 | 9·5 | 998·08 | 6·9 | 1,067·05 |
| Senior Officers of the Armed Forces | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Admiral of the Fleet<br>Field Marshal<br>Marshal of the Royal Air Force | 3·2 | 1,482·76 | 4·7 | 1,551·72 | 5·2 | 1,633·14 | 5·0 | 1,714·56 | 7·0 | 1,834·29 | 9·4 | 2,006·70 |
| Admiral<br>General<br>Air Chief Marshal | 3·5 | 1,189·66 | 4·7 | 1,245·21 | 5·4 | 1,312·26 | 5·1 | 1,379·31 | 6·9 | 1,475·09 | 9·4 | 1,613·98 |
| Vice Admiral<br>Lieutenant General<br>Air Marshal | 3·6 | 833·33 | 4·6 | 871·65 | 5·5 | 919·54 | 5·0 | 965·52 | 9·7 | 1,059·39 | 9·6 | 1,160·92 |

| | 1986 per cent. increase | 1987 £ | per cent. increase | 1988 £ | per cent. increase | 1989 £ | per cent. increase | 1990 £ | per cent. increase | 1991 £ | per cent. increase | £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rear Admiral<br>Major General<br>Air Vice-Marshal | 4·0 | 677·20 | 4·7 | 708·81 | 5·4 | 747·13 | 10·5 | 825·67 | 9·7 | 906·13 | 12·1 | 1,015·33 |
| Members of the Judiciary[3] | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lord Chief Justice | 3·2 | 1,482·76 | 4·7 | 1,551·72 | 5·2 | 1,633·14 | 5·0 | 1,714·56 | 7·0 | 1,834·29 | 9·4 | 2,006·70 |
| Lords of Appeal | 3·5 | 1,367·82 | 4·7 | 1,431·99 | 5·4 | 1,508·62 | 5·1 | 1,585·25 | 6·9 | 1,695·40 | 9·6 | 1,858·24 |
| Lords Justices of Appeal | 3·6 | 1,310·34 | 4·9 | 1,374·52 | 5·6 | 1,451·15 | 5·0 | 1,522·99 | 6·9 | 1,628·35 | 9·4 | 1,781·61 |
| High Court Judges | 3·5 | 1,189·65 | 4·7 | 1,245·21 | 5·4 | 1,312·26 | 5·1 | 1,379·31 | 6·9 | 1,475·10 | 9·4 | 1,613·98 |
| Senior Circuit Judges | 3·4 | 881·23 | 4·9 | 924·33 | 5·5 | 975·10 | 4·9 | 1,022·99 | 10·3 | 1,128·35 | 16·1 | 1,310·34 |
| Circuit Judges | 3·8 | 795·02 | 4·8 | 833·33 | 5·3 | 877·39 | 5·0 | 921·45 | 10·3 | 1,016·35 | 16·1 | 1,180·08 |
| District Judges | 4·4 | 610·15 | 5·2 | 641·76 | 11·9 | 718·39 | 5·1 | 754·79 | 10·3 | 832·37 | 16·2 | 967·43 |

*Notes:*

A. All rates quoted are national rates. They do not include a London scale introduced for Civil Service grades 2 and 3 in 1990.

B. All rates quoted were either paid from 1 April or phased in during the following year.

*Footnotes:*

[1] Source New Earnings Survey.

[2] Range pay introduced from 1985.

[3] Posts shown are key examples of those within the judicial salary structure.

### Taxation

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will issue guidelines to local tax offices on the taxation of payments made to employees by way of compensation for breach of contract, classifying the schedule under which such tax is collected; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Payments of compensation for loss of office are chargeable to income tax under section 148 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. Local tax offices have detailed instructions on how to deal with such cases.

### Business Expansion Scheme

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a table of expenditure on the business expansion scheme cross-referenced to standard regions, showing Greater London as a separate region, for each year from 1984-85 *(a)* at cash prices and *(b)* at 1984-85 prices.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I regret that the information requested is not available. Available information is published in chapter 7 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1991". Regional analyses are given in tables 7·5 and 7·6.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Portillo:** An announcement will be made in due course.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Portillo:** No estimate has yet been made, since details of the programme have still to be settled.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which parts of his Department are going to be market-tested following the review which has recently been undertaken as a result of 'Competing for Quality'.

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* An announcement will be made in due course.

### Departmental Staff

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

**Mr. Nelson** *[pursuant to his reply, 24 June 1992 c. 223-24]:* I regret that a column in the table was omitted from the reply. The complete reply is as follows:

The responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in the Treasury are as follows. The information on the numbers of staff reporting to each is contained in the table.

*Deputy Secretary (Overseas Finance):*
Responsible for:
- European Community Group
- Aid and Export Finance Group
- International Finance Group

*Deputy Secretary (Public Finance)*
Responsible for:
- Fiscal Policy Group
- Monetary Policy Group

*Deputy Secretary (Public Services)*
Responsible for:
- Local Government Group
- Health, Social Services and Territorial Group
- Running Costs Division (part)
- Central Unit on Purchasing
- (also has responsibility for CCTA which is to be transferred to the Office for Public Services and Science in due course)

*Deputy Secretary (Civil Service Management and Pay)*
Responsible for:
- Pay Group
- Personnel Policy Group
- Management Policy and Running Costs Group
- CS Catering Organisation (Forward)

*Deputy Secretary (Industry)*
Responsible for:
Public Enterprises Group
Industry, Agriculture and Employment Group
Home and Education Group

*Deputy Secretary (Financial Institutions and Markets)*
Responsible for:
Banking Group
Securities and Investment Services Group (formerly the Financial Service Division of the DTI, transferred to the Treasury in June 1992).

| *Grade* | *DS Overseas finance* | *DS Public finance* | *DS Public services* | *DS CS Management and pay* | *DS Industry* | *DS Financial institutions and markets* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| G4 | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| G5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 5 |
| G6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 1 |
| G7 | 17 | 9 | 16 | 42 | 17 | 16 |
| SEO | 3 | 1 | 6 | 37 | 3 | 6 |
| HEO | 4 | 1 | 10 | 30 | 13 | 13 |
| HEO(D) | 2 | 1 | 2 | — | 1 | 1 |
| AT | — | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| EO | 9 | 4 | 8 | 45 | 10 | 12 |
| SAS | — | — | — | 2 | — | — |
| AS | — | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| SSO | — | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| HSO | — | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| SEA | 2 | 4 | — | — | — | 1 |
| EA | 3 | — | — | — | — | — |
| AO | 11 | 6 | 10 | 43 | 16 | 14 |
| AA | 4 | 3 | 7 | 17 | 6 | 8 |
| SPS | 1 | — | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| PS | 11 | 8 | 9 | 16 | 10 | 8 |
| Typist | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| SB2 | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Total | 81 | 48 | 87 | 265 | 97 | 97 |

*Notes:*
1. Staff in post figures as at 1 June 1992, except for Financial Services command which includes latest estimate of staff being transferred from DTI.
2. Figures for part-time staff rounded down.
3. In addition to the above staff there are 761 staff in the following commands:
First Permanent Secretary, Second Permanent Secretary responsible for Public Expenditure (ie, the General Expenditure Policy Group and the Defence Policy and Material Group), Chief Economic Adviser, Chief Accountancy Adviser and the Establishments and Organisation Group.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Recycled Stationery

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if steps will be taken to ensure that stocks of recycled stationery are permanently kept in all the stationery cupboards adjacent to offices.

**Mr. Beith:** I understand that steps have been taken for stationery cupboards to be stocked with recycled stationery where a particular demand has been identified.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Freedom of Movement (Doctors)

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will use the British presidency of the EC Council of Ministers to press for reform of the EC directive granting freedom of movement within Europe to doctors so as to include doctors who qualified in non-EC countries.

**The Prime Minister:** Before we could agree to any such proposals we should need to be satisfied with the standard of non-EC qualifications recognised in other member states.

Our overriding aim must be to ensure that the safety and high quality of medical care provided for NHS patients is not endangered.

The Commission is examining the issue and negotiations are taking place between health officials of member states.

## EDUCATION

### Schools, Buckinghamshire

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to determine the school standard number reductions proposed by Buckinghamshire county council in respect of *(a)* Shelburne County first school, High Wycombe, *(b)* Loudwater County combined school, High Wycombe, *(c)* Gerrards Cross Church of England combined school, Gerrards Cross and *(d)* Waddesdon County combined school, New Aylesbury.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend is currently considering the applications made by Buckinghamshire county council to reduce the standard number at these schools. He hopes to announce his decision on the applications in the very near future.

### Examinations

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when he will publish information collected from the 1991 school examination survey.

(2) when he will publish information collected from 1991 Form 7d about the national performance in GCSE and A/AS level examinations.

**Mr. Forth:** The standard statistical bulletin drawing from the information collected by the 1991 schools examination survey—Form 7d—is expected to be published towards the end of July.

### School Governors

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many new school governors he expects to recruit as a result of the school governor recruitment campaign.

**Mr. Forth:** Evidence suggests that around 75,000 school governor vacancies will need to be filled in the autumn. Our national campaign to raise awareness of governor issues is proving successful. We are confident that sufficient numbers of potential school governors will come forward.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to bring forward proposals to empower the Audit Commission to audit or appoint auditors for the accounts of grant-maintained schools;

(2) how many grant-maintained schools have sought the advice of the Audit Commission under section 220 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

**Mr. Forth:** The Audit Commission is empowered to audit grant maintained schools, but it is for the governing body of each school to appoint their auditors. My Department does not have any information on the number of schools that have sought advice from the Audit Commission.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what projections have been made for the number of grant-maintained schools for each year for the next five years.

**Mr. Forth:** I expect the numbers of grant-maintained schools to continue to increase markedly over the next few years and to see grant-maintained status become the natural organisational model for schools.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will carry out an investigation into the effect of the grant-maintained status of schools on parental choice in Hillingdon, Ealing and Bromley education authorities.

**Mr. Forth:** The option of grant-maintained status for schools enhances choice for parents. We are aware that the allocation of secondary school places for September has taken slightly longer than usual this year in Bromley and Hillingdon. The Department has discussed the position with the two local education authorities and is encouraging co-operation between the LEAs and grant-maintained schools on a voluntary basis in order to minimise delays in allocations without restricting choice. The Department is not aware of any difficulties over parental choice in Ealing.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether schools applying for grant-maintained status have to supply him with details of their admissions policy.

**Mr. Forth:** All proposals for grant-maintained status must set out the proposed admission arrangements for the school. The arrangements have to be approved by my right hon. Friend as part of the approval of grant-maintained status.

### Pupil Exclusions

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will establish a national system to monitor the number of exclusions of pupils from schools.

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils have been expelled *(a)* permanently and *(b)* temporarily from schools in the United Kingdom for each year since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** Where schools in England are concerned, information on temporary exclusions is not collected centrally. Information on permanent exclusions is being collected under the national exclusions reporting system —NERS—over a two-year period beginning with the summer term 1990. Data from year one of the exercise are being analysed; those for year two are still coming in. My right hon. Friend will review the operation of the exclusion provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 in the light of the NERS data and other evidence.

### Further Education Colleges

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the role of Coopers and Lybrand in assisting further education and sixth form colleges with their new management responsibilities.

**Mr. Forman:** Subject to contract, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte has been asked to carry out a review of the preparations being made for independence by each of the colleges that will enter the new further education sector on 1 April 1993. It will provide advice and assistance to individual colleges and will assess whether their controls and systems are adequate to safeguard the public funds to be entrusted to them by the Further Education Funding Council.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Forman:** A preliminary estimate of the full cost of the market testing initiative within the Department and the Teachers' Pensions Agency since November 1991 is £55,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Forman:** No such estimate has yet been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Forman:** As stated in the White Paper "Competing for Quality", targets for the market testing programme for 1992-93 for the Department and the Teachers' Pensions Agency will be announced later this year.

## Transitional Funding

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been allocated to further education councils under transitional funding arrangements; and on what specific projects.

**Mr. Forman:** A total of £25 million will be made available to the Further Education Funding Council for England in 1992-93 to meet transitional costs involved in establishing the new further education sector, including grants to FE corporations and the running costs of the council. Funding for the Further Education Funding Council for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I am advised that he has allocated £2 million to the council for Wales to meet transitional costs in 1992-93.

## Special Educational Needs

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list setting out the percentage of children statemented in primary schools in each local education authority area in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Forth:** The percentages of pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained primary schools, in each local education authority in England, in January 1990 and 1991 are shown in the table. Information for January 1992 is not yet available.

*Percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained primary schools in each local education authority in England*

| | 1990 | 1991 |
|---|---|---|
| City | — | 0·96 |
| Camden | — | 0·90 |
| Greenwich | — | 0·94 |
| Hackney | — | 1·06 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | — | 0·90 |
| Islington | — | 1·27 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | — | 0·51 |
| Lambeth | — | 1·19 |
| Lewisham | — | 0·52 |
| Southwark | — | 0·99 |
| Tower Hamlets | — | 0·50 |
| Wandsworth | — | 1·50 |
| Westminster | — | 0·59 |
| ILEA | 0·90 | — |
| Barking | 0·41 | 0·63 |
| Barnet | 0·46 | 0·48 |
| Bexley | 0·98 | 0·97 |
| Brent | 0·24 | 0·27 |
| Bromley | 1·64 | 1·71 |
| Croydon | 0·79 | 0·66 |
| Ealing | 0·41 | 0·55 |
| Enfield | 0·09 | 0·08 |
| Haringey | 0·24 | 0·27 |
| Harrow | 0·75 | 0·87 |
| Havering | 0·69 | 0·92 |
| Hillingdon | 0·34 | 0·38 |
| Hounslow | 1·38 | 1·70 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 0·52 | 0·67 |
| Merton | 0·55 | 0·76 |
| Newham | 0·47 | 0·69 |
| Redbridge | 0·20 | 0·25 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0·90 | 1·02 |
| Sutton | 0·73 | 0·92 |
| Waltham Forest | 0·29 | 0·33 |
| Birmingham | 0·35 | 0·34 |
| Coventry | 0·26 | 0·27 |
| Dudley | 0·56 | 0·52 |
| Sandwell | 0·17 | 0·17 |
| Solihull | 0·76 | 0·77 |
| Walsall | 0·48 | 0·67 |
| Wolverhampton | 0·73 | 0·76 |
| Knowsley | 0·28 | 0·50 |
| Liverpool | 0·24 | 0·28 |
| St. Helens | 0·56 | 0·65 |
| Sefton | 0·56 | 0·68 |
| Wirral | 0·93 | 0·98 |
| Bolton | 0·29 | 0·37 |
| Bury | 1·39 | 1·55 |
| Manchester | 0·12 | 0·13 |
| Oldham | 0·76 | 0·96 |
| Rochdale | 0·56 | 0·64 |
| Salford | 0·33 | 0·41 |
| Stockport | 1·25 | 1·46 |
| Tameside | 1·19 | 1·23 |
| Trafford | 0·88 | 0·88 |
| Wigan | 0·50 | 0·94 |
| Barnsley | 0·51 | 0·76 |
| Doncaster | 0·33 | 0·35 |
| Rotherham | 0·52 | 0·78 |
| Sheffield | 0·79 | 0·66 |
| Bradford | 0·22 | 0·24 |
| Calderdale | 0·61 | 0·69 |
| Kirklees | 1·06 | 1·24 |
| Leeds | 1·13 | 1·07 |
| Wakefield | 0·43 | 0·45 |
| Gateshead | 0·22 | 0·22 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 0·64 | 0·64 |
| North Tyneside | 0·77 | 0·90 |
| South Tyneside | 0·65 | 0·63 |
| Sunderland | 0·51 | 0·55 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0·00 | 0·00 |
| Avon | 0·94 | 0·71 |
| Bedfordshire | 0·61 | 0·69 |
| Berkshire | 0·65 | 0·79 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1·05 | 1·17 |
| Cambridgeshire | 0·89 | 0·86 |
| Cheshire | 1·30 | 1·38 |
| Cleveland | 0·74 | 0·75 |
| Cornwall | 2·12 | 2·16 |
| Cumbria | 1·28 | 1·44 |
| Derbyshire | 1·07 | 1·17 |
| Devon | 1·42 | 1·61 |
| Dorset | 0·46 | 0·39 |
| Durham | 0·66 | 0·75 |
| East Sussex | 0·12 | 0·19 |
| Essex | 0·66 | 0·66 |
| Gloucestershire | 0·30 | 0·43 |
| Hampshire | 0·64 | 0·91 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 0·30 | 0·45 |
| Hertfordshire | 0·89 | 0·98 |
| Humberside | 0·53 | 0·55 |
| Isle of Wight | 0·64 | 0·58 |
| Kent | 0·57 | 0·70 |
| Lancashire | 0·70 | 0·84 |
| Leicestershire | 0·74 | 0·83 |
| Lincolnshire | 0·83 | 0·98 |
| Norfolk | 1·50 | 1·65 |
| North Yorkshire | 0·89 | 0·99 |
| Northamptonshire | 0·48 | 0·57 |
| Northumberland | 0·72 | 0·83 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0·06 | 0·12 |
| Oxfordshire | 0·07 | 0·24 |
| Shropshire | 1·01 | 1·37 |
| Somerset | 1·29 | 0·90 |
| Staffordshire | 0·49 | 0·59 |
| Suffolk | 1·51 | 1·41 |
| Surrey | 1·56 | 1·67 |
| Warwickshire | 0·44 | 0·53 |
| West Sussex | 0·37 | 0·40 |
| Wiltshire | 1·79 | 2·02 |
| England | 0·73 | 0·81 |

### School Places

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information he has on the number of schools which do not have sufficient places to meet the demand from parents for their children; and what provisions are proposed to enable schools to expand to meet the demand.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not held centrally.

It is for local authorities to ensure that there are sufficient school places within their area to meet the demand. We have recently announced that we intend to make capital resources available to enable good schools which are popular with parents to expand, provided that, for schools which they maintain, the LEA give their application appropriate priority. We have consulted the local authority associations, denominational bodies and others concerned about this. Details of the operation of this initiative will be issued shortly to LEAs and others.

### Second-tier Schools

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 June, *Official Report*, column 123, what time scale he puts on the elimination of second-tier schools.

**Mr. Forth:** The Government are committed to raising standards across the board, in particular through the national curriculum and by maximum delegation of responsibility to individual schools through local management of schools and, increasingly, by the acquisition of GM status. Steady progress is being made towards our objective of the highest possible standards in all schools.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Asylum Bill

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he proposes to appoint any special inspectors in terms of the Asylum Bill introduced in the last Parliament.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** There is no provision for special adjudicators in current immigration legislation. The Asylum Bill introduced in the last Parliament fell with the dissolution of that Parliament. The designation of special adjudicators will be addressed after the enactment of the legislation the Government propose to introduce later this Session.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested: and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992, at column *102*.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The full cost of the market testing initiative in our Department since November 1991 has been £84,495.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** No such estimate has been made.

### Land Registry

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what are the key performance targets for Her Majesty's Land Registry executive agency for 1992-93.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The table sets out the key performance targets that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has set for Her Majesty's Land Registry executive agency for 1992-93.

*HM Land Registry Executive Agency*
*Key performance targets 1992-93*

| *Indicator* | *Target* |
|---|---|
| 1. PRODUCTIVITY | |
| Progressive reduction in unit costs | To achieve or better a 6 per cent. improvement over the 3 year period 1991-92 to 1993-94 |
| Progressive increase in output per post per year | |
| 2. QUALITY OF SERVICE | |
| *Speed* | |
| Percentage of pre-completion applications handled in three days | 92 per cent. |
| Average handling time for post-completion applications | 6 weeks |
| *Accuracy* | |
| Percentage of pre-completion applications handled free of error | 99·65 per cent. |
| Percentage of post-completion applications handled free of error | 97·50 per cent. |
| *Complaints* | |
| Number and kind of complaints | Targets to be established |
| 3. DEVELOPMENT OF LAND REGISTRATION | |
| Number of registered titles compared with estimated potential titles[1] | Registered 14·50 million<br>Potential 21·00 million |
| New and converted computerised titles compared with manual stock[1] | Computerised 6·00 million<br>Manual 8·50 million |

[1] Activity in the conveyancing market and the consequent number of transactions directly affects totals at the year end.

### Legal Aid

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what contributions to criminal legal aid by defendants over the past 10 years have *(a)* been ordered by the court and *(b)* been paid.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** For the amount of contributions to criminal legal aid paid by defendants over the last 10

years, I refer my hon. and learned Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 21 May 1992, *Official Report* columns *207-8*. Information on the amount of contributions ordered by the courts is not collected centrally.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the cost of criminal legal aid to the Exchequer over each of the past 10 years; and how that cost divides between *(a)* magistrates courts, *(b)* Crown courts, *(c)* the Appeal court and *(d)* others.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** In each of the past 10 years, the cost to the Exchequer of criminal legal aid, divided between magistrates' courts, higher courts and others, was as follows:

*Criminal legal aid expenditure (£ million)*

| *Financial Year* | *Magistrates' courts payments* | *Higher courts payments* | *Other payments* | *Receipts* | *Cost to the Exchequer* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 56·12 | 51·98 | 5·77 | 1·77 | 112·10 |
| 1983-84 | 62·18 | 58·81 | 7·12 | 2·03 | 126·08 |
| 1984-85 | 68·06 | 67·95 | 10·21 | 1·98 | 144·23 |
| 1985-86 | 81·35 | 75·29 | 15·22 | 1·98 | 169·88 |
| 1986-87 | 87·07 | 91·83 | 29·59 | 2·35 | 206·14 |
| 1987-88 | 114·02 | 100·09 | 37·84 | 2·90 | 249·05 |
| 1988-89 | 127·39 | 119·30 | 39·78 | 3·06 | 283·41 |
| 1989-90 | 151·48 | 135·05 | 47·94 | 3·68 | 330·79 |
| 1990-91 | 174·90 | 157·81 | 56·01 | 4·54 | 384·18 |
| 1991-92 | 212·03 | 187·47 | 76·32 | 3·38 | 472·44 |

*Note:* It was not possible to divide legal aid expenditure between the Crown and Appeal courts in each of the past 10 years, therefore higher courts expenditure has been provided instead.

## Criminal Proceedings

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, in criminal proceedings over each of the past 10 years *(a)* what amount of fines have been paid by defendants and *(b)* what amount of costs have been recovered from defendants.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The total income from fines, fixed penalties and fees, and the total costs recovered from defendants and others in the last 10 years is set out in the table. The substantial fall in the amount of costs recovered between 1985-86 and 1986-87 followed the establishment of the Crown prosecution service: since 1 April 1986 most orders for costs are in respect of costs payable to the Crown prosecution service.

| *Year* | *Fines and fees £ million* | *Cost recovered £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 113 | 3·215 |
| 1983-84 | 128 | 3·379 |
| 1984-85 | 124 | 3·509 |
| 1985-86 | 143 | 3·775 |
| 1986-87 | 159 | 0·057 |
| 1987-88 | 185 | 0·111 |
| 1988-89 | 189 | 0·040 |
| 1989-90 | 241 | 0·044 |
| 1990-91 | 269 | 0·043 |
| 1991-92 | 238 | 0·046 |

## War Crimes

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many files relating to war crimes in the Channel Islands during world war two are retained by his Department and withheld from the Public Record Office.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** No files relating to war crimes in the Channel islands are retained by my Department.

## Court of Protection

**Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether the Court of Protection produces annual reports or any other review of its performance in managing investments.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Reviews of investment performance for individual portfolios which need active management will normally be undertaken by the appointed stockbroker or financial adviser. These are examined by the receiver and the court.

At a more general level, the Lord Chancellor's honorary investment advisory committee meets regularly to review and comment on investment policy.

## Public Trust Office

**Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will set up an inquiry into the way in which the Public Trust Office cares for and protects the assets of people who are, due to mental disorder, incapable of managing their own property and affairs.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The work of the Public Trust Office, and in particular the work connected with the administration of the financial affairs of mentally incapacitated adults, is presently, or is shortly to be, the subject of a number of reviews. The office is being reviewed by officials of the Lord Chancellor's Department as part of the Government's next steps initiative. The Comptroller and Auditor General has begun a value for money study of the work the Public Trust Office undertakes in the care and protection of mental patients' assets. In addition, the Law Commission is also undertaking work in this area. In view of these studies I do not believe it would be right, or necessary, to set up a separate inquiry.

### Mentally Incapacitated People

**Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects the Law Commission to publish its proposals relating to the adequacy of legal and other procedures for decision-making on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Law Commission published its consultation paper "Mentally Incapacitated Adults and Decision Making: an Overview" on 30 April 1991. That paper produced a large number of responses in the light of which the commission is now considering its future programme of work on this topic and may undertake further consultation before publishing any final proposals.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Population Growth

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what specific respects the projected new United Nations Sustainable Development Commission takes account of world population growth.

**Mr. Lennox Boyd:** The details of the Sustainable Development Commission will be considered by the United Nations General Assembly in the autumn. The commission will be looking at all aspects of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, of which population growth is an important part.

### Malawi

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government have taken to ensure that the humanitarian aid for Malawi is reaching the targeted groups.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The £7 million of United Kingdom bilateral humanitarian aid recently committed to Malawi is being channelled through the World Food Programme and non-governmental organisations which have established procedures and the capacity of targeting beneficiaries and for monitoring the effectiveness of aid delivery.

In Malawi, Her Majesty's Government's representatives are participating in a committee, consisting of the Malawi Government, donors and non-governmental organisations which has been established to monitor the drought situation, including the identification and targeting of those most in need.

### Population Control

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the sums given to *(a)* the International Planned Parenthood Federation and *(b)* the United Nations population fund in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The information is as follows:

£ thousands

| | IPPF | UNFPA |
|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 2,150 | 2,250 |
| 1982 | 2,550 | 2,650 |
| 1983 | 2,700 | 2,700 |
| 1984 | 3,000 | 3,000 |
| 1985 | 4,500 | 4,500 |
| 1986 | 5,400 | 4,500 |
| 1987 | 6,000 | 5,000 |
| 1988 | 5,479 | 5,250 |
| 1989 | [1]8,255 | 5,500 |
| 1990 | [1]7,488 | [2]6,000 |
| 1991 | 7,262[3] | 7,500 |

[1] From 1989 onwards the figures include contributions to IPPF Aids unit.
[2] £3 million of 1990 contribution actually paid in February 1991.
[3] Provisional.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what sums have been given to the Chinese Government for the purposes of population control;

(2) what grants have been given by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations population fund partly or wholly for the purpose of aiding population control programmes in China; and what sums are involved.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have made no bilateral contributions to the Chinese Government for the purposes of population control.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation is contributing some US$1 million a year in technical and financial support to the non-governmental Family Planning Association of China. The Chinese FPA's programme covers family life and parenting education, including information on the full range of contraceptive methods provided through the Government services, to help increase people's awareness of the choices available to them. It supplies no clinical services.

The United Nations population fund contributes some US$10 million a year focusing on provision of reliable contraceptives, the extension of maternal and child health care and family planning services, development of special income generating and community development projects to improve the lives and status of rural women, and strengthening population education in schools.

The British Government do not and will not support coercive approaches to family planning or the use of abortion as a means of contraception: nor do either of these organisations.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the refusal of the United States Government to provide funds for both the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations population fund since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The United States Government do not support the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations population fund under its "Mexico City Population Policy" set out in 1984, and the subsequent Kemp-Kasten amendment enacted in 1985. A United States Administration explanation of their policy has been deposited in the Libraries of the House. The United States has not withdrawn from funding

population programmes worldwide and remains the largest bilateral aid donor for family planning programmes.

### Overseas Aid

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value of *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1989-90 overseas aid budgets expressed in 1991-92 price terms.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* Net expenditure on overseas aid expressed in 1991-92 prices was £1,853 million in 1979-80 and £1,738 million in 1989-90.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what share of gross national product has been devoted to overseas aid in every year since 1979.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The information is as follows:

| *Calendar Year* | *Net Official Development Assistance as percentage of GNP* |
|---|---|
| 1979 | 0·51 |
| 1980 | 0·35 |
| 1981 | 0·42 |
| 1982 | 0·37 |
| 1983 | 0·35 |
| 1984 | 0·33 |
| 1985 | 0·33 |
| 1986 | 0·31 |
| 1987 | 0·28 |
| 1988 | 0·32 |
| 1989 | 0·31 |
| 1990 | 0·27 |
| 1991 | 0·32 |

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what share of their gross national product is devoted to overseas aid by each OECD and EC country.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* This information is available for countries which are members of the development assistance committee of the OECD, of which 10 are member states of the EC. The latest figures are for 1991:

*Net official development assistance as a percentage of GNP*

| *Country* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| *EC member states* | |
| Belgium | 0·41 |
| Denmark | 0·96 |
| France | [1]0·56 |
| Germany | 0·40 |
| Ireland | 0·19 |
| Italy | 0·25 |
| Netherlands | 0·88 |
| Portugal | 0·28 |
| Spain | 0·23 |
| United Kingdom | 0·32 |
| *Non-EC member states* | |
| Australia | 0·38 |
| Austria | 0·34 |
| Canada | 0·45 |
| Finland | 0·76 |
| Japan | 0·32 |
| New Zealand | 0·23 |
| Norway | 1·14 |
| Sweden | 0·92 |
| Switzerland | 0·32 |
| United States | 0·17 |

[1] 0·80 if assistance to Overseas Departments and Territories is included.

## WALES

### Rural Housing

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money Housing for Wales has invested in the provision of rural housing in each of the last three years; and what proportion that represents of Housing for Wales' overall budget.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Net programme expenditure on rural housing is given in the table:

| *Year* | *£ million* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 19·0 | 22·5 |
| 1990-91 | 23·6 | 24·3 |
| 1991-92 | 24·7 | 28·0 |

### Homelessness

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many individuals were registered under the homeless persons legislation as being homeless in Cynon Valley in each year since 1979; and what was the percentage change in each year on the previous year.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Numbers of persons in households accepted as homeless by Cynon Valley borough council under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and part III of the Housing Act 1985 are given in the table:

*Number of persons in households accepted as homeless Cynon Valley*

| *Year* | *Number* | *Percentage change on previous year* |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 898 | — |
| 1980 | 1,018 | 13·4 |
| 1981 | 965 | −5·2 |
| 1982 | 985 | 2·1 |
| 1983 | 1,207 | 22·5 |
| 1984 | 959 | −20·5 |
| 1985 | 840 | −12·4 |
| 1986 | 942 | 12·1 |
| 1987 | 603 | −36·0 |
| 1988 | 710 | 17·7 |
| 1989 | 530 | −25·4 |
| 1990 | 623 | 17·5 |
| 1991 | 1,017 | 63·2 |

### Council Tax

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that districts and boroughs in Wales have received sufficient central Government moneys to enable them to prepare for the council tax; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will fully reimburse the boroughs and districts of Wales their costs on council tax preparations.

**Mr. David Hunt:** My proposals for assisting local authorities in Wales in preparing for the council tax were debated and approved by the House on 24 June.

## Nurses' Grading

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals have been determined in respect of nurse grading *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in each health authority in Wales, in each month since the current process started; and how many, in each case, were (i) allowed and (ii) disallowed in each month.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information in the form requested on numbers of clinical grading appeals determined by employing authorities is not collected centrally. Current available information on total numbers of appeals heard at employing authority level is shown in the table:

| *Health authority* | *Appeals heard* | *Allowed* | *Disallowed* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 355 | 99 | 256 |
| East Dyfed | 278 | 80 | 198 |
| Gwent | 710 | 86 | 624 |
| Gwynedd | 704 | 54 | 650 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 531 | 64 | 467 |
| Pembrokeshire | 85 | 13 | 72 |
| Powys | 578 | 312 | 266 |
| South Glamorgan | 670 | 84 | 586 |
| West Glamorgan | 293 | 17 | 276 |
| WALES | 4,204 | 809 | 3,395 |

Other appeals have been withdrawn or conceded without a formal hearing.

At the Welsh appeals committee—regional—level 345 appeals have been dealt with and are as follows:

| *Year* | *Month* | *Appeals heard* | *Allowed* | *Disallowed* | *Failure to agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Clwyd* | | | | | |
| 1990 | October | 12 | — | 1 | 11 |
| 1991 | October | 15 | — | — | 15 |
| 1992 | May | 10 | — | — | 10 |
| TOTAL | | 37 | — | 1 | 36 |
| *East Dyfed* | | | | | |
| 1990 | November | 8 | — | — | 8 |
| 1991 | April | 7 | 1 | — | 6 |
| | September | 3 | 3 | — | — |
| | October | 7 | — | — | 7 |
| TOTAL | | 25 | 4 | — | 21 |
| *Gwent* | | | | | |
| 1990 | April | 6 | 3 | — | 3 |
| 1992 | February | 27 | 4 | 12 | 11 |
| | April | 35 | — | 24 | 11 |
| | May | 7 | 2 | — | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 75 | 9 | 36 | 30 |
| *Gwynedd* | | | | | |
| 1989 | November | 2 | — | — | 2 |
| 1990 | January | 5 | 2 | — | 3 |
| | April | 10 | 4 | — | 6 |
| | May | 12 | 1 | — | 11 |
| | August | 15 | 3 | — | 12 |
| 1991 | January | 15 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| | April | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| | June | 10 | 8 | — | 2 |
| | August | 13 | 4 | 1 | 8 |
| TOTAL | | 89 | 32 | 3 | 54 |
| *Mid Glamorgan* | | | | | |
| 1991 | June | 11 | — | — | 11 |
| | October | 8 | 4 | 4 | — |
| 1992 | April | 9 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 28 | 7 | 6 | 15 |
| *Powys* | | | | | |
| 1990 | May | 12 | 9 | — | 3 |
| 1991 | February | 7 | 4 | — | 3 |
| 1992 | April | 9 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 28 | 15 | 1 | 12 |
| *South Glamorgan* | | | | | |
| 1990 | October | 8 | — | — | 8 |
| 1991 | January | 15 | — | 2 | 13 |
| | July | 2 | — | — | 2 |

| Year | Month | Appeals heard | Allowed | Disallowed | Failure to agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1992 | May | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 26 | — | 2 | 24 |
| *West Glamorgan* | | | | | |
| 1990 | September | 5 | 2 | — | 3 |
| 1991 | March | 19 | — | — | 19 |
| | July | 5 | — | — | 5 |
| | August | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 1992 | February | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| | March | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| TOTAL | | 37 | 5 | 2 | 30 |

At the national, negotiating council level, six Welsh appeals have been heard and are as follows:

| Health authority | Appeals heard | Allowed | Disallowed | Failure to agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| East Dyfed | | | | |
| April 1991 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Gwent | | | | |
| January 1991 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Powys | | | | |
| April 1991 | 4 | — | — | 4 |

## Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. David Hunt:** As promised in the White Paper "Competing for Quality" Cm. 1730, targets for the market testing programme will be announced later this year.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total cost so far of the market testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The estimated cost to date is £76,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market testing programme.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The purpose of the market testing programme is to test by competition the value for money represented by the present arrangements for undertaking non-core activities and thus to identify and introduce more effective arrangements. We have made no estimate of likely savings because no pre-emptive judgment has been made of the relative efficiency of the present arrangements.

# NORTHERN IRELAND

## Cardiac Surgery

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in tabular form the number of patients sent for cardiac surgery by the several health and social service boards to hospitals outwith Northern Ireland in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Hanley:** The figures for 1991-92 and the current year to date are as follows:

| Year | Northern | Southern | Eastern | Western |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991-92 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 24 |
| 1992-93 | 4 | 3 | 7 | nil |

## Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 respectively, and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Mates:** The information requested is as follows:

| | Northern Ireland Civil Service (1) | | Home Civil Service (2) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| 1 | 0 | — | 0 | — |
| 2 | 0 | — | 0 | — |
| 3 | 1 | 2·4 | 0 | — |
| 4 | 0 | — | 0 | — |
| 5 | 14 | 7·4 | 0 | — |
| 6 | 60 | 17·2 | 0 | — |
| 7 | 81 | 9·7 | 4 | 20 |
| OVERALL | 12,661 | 43 | 106 | 50 |

Notes: 1. As at 1 January 1992.
2. As at 1 June 1992.

## Wild Birds

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is target for special protection area designation under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds during 1992.

**Mr. Atkins:** Two. These are Swan island, Larne lough, Co. Antrim, which was designated on 10 March 1992 and Sheep island off the north Antrim coast, which will be designated later this year.

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many staff in his Department and of

what grades are engaged *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time, in preparing designations of special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds.

**Mr. Atkins:** While there are no staff engaged full time in preparing designations of special protection areas, a portion of time is spent by the following on this work:

| *Grade* | *Number of individuals* |
|---|---|
| Senior Principal Scientific Officer | 1 |
| Principal Scientific Officer | 1 |
| Senior Scientific Officer | 2 |
| Higher Scientific Officer | 1 |
| Scientific Officer | 4 |
| Principal Officer | 1 |
| Deputy Principal | 1 |
| Staff Officer | 1 |
| Executive Officer I | 1 |
| Executive Officer II | 1 |
| Administrative Assistant | 1 |

## Cyclists (Helmets)

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to make the wearing of helmets compulsory for child cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** None. However, it is Government policy to encourage all cyclists to wear helmets and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland's ongoing programme of promoting cycle training for primary school children is designed to raise the child's awareness of the potential dangers of cycling on the road and to encourage the wearing of cycle helmets.

## Nursery Schools

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursery school places were provided by each education and library board in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Hanley:** The full-time equivalent pupil places provided in controlled nursery schools, by each education and library board, were as follows:—

| *Board* | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belfast | 675 | 675 | 675 | 675 | 675 | 675 | 700 | 700 | 700 | 700 |
| Western | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| North-Eastern | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 | 725 |
| South-Eastern | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 500 | 475 | 475 | 475 | 475 |
| Southern | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 | 525 |

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide additional funding for education and library boards to increase provision of nursery school places in Northern Ireland to the same level as nursery provision in England.

**Mr. Hanley:** Government recognise the value of nursery education but limitations on resources for school building, and the need to give priority to provision for children of compulsory school age, have meant that only limited expansion of nursery provision has been possible in recent years. I can offer no immediate prospect of change.

## Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Mates:** As promised in the White Paper "Competing for Quality" departmental targets for market testing in 1992-93 will be announced later in the year.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Mates:** Information on the total cost of the initiative is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr, Mates:** No such estimate has been made.

## Health and Social Services Boards

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the perceived religious affiliation of the executive and non-executive directors of each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Hanley** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* Information is available only on the perceived religious affiliation of executive directors which is as follows:

| *Health and Social Services Board* | *Protestant* | *Roman Catholic* | *Not Known* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern | 2 | 3 | — |
| Northern | 5 | — | 1 |
| Southern | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| Western | 1 | 2 | 1 |

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the perceived religious affiliation of persons working in each of the health and social services board planning sections in Northern Ireland by grade.

**Mr. Hanley** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The perceived religious affiliation of persons working in each of the health and social services boards planning section is as follows:

| *Health and Social Services Board* | *Protestant* | *Roman Catholic* | *Not Known* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Eastern | 11 | 16 | 5 |
| Northern | 16 | 4 | 1 |
| Southern | 4 | 7 | — |
| Western | 4 | 4 | — |

It would not be appropriate to break these down by grade.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### United Nations

6. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what submissions have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the United Nations Secretary-General following the Security Council's summit initiative of 31 January.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The Secretary-General's report on peacemaking, peacekeeping, and preventive diplomacy which was commissioned by the Security Council summit of 31 January is now available. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. The 12 member states of the European Community submitted a paper on preventive diplomacy as their contribution to the Secretary-General's work.

### Punjab and Kashmir

19. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of India about human rights in Punjab and Kashmir.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Both bilaterally and with our European Community partners we have raised our concerns about human rights with the Indian Government on some 17 occasions over the last 12 months. I raised this with the Indian High Commissioner in May, and our High Commissioner did so with the Indian Home Affairs Minister in New Delhi in early June.

38. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the British Government have made to the Indian Government on the question of self-determination for Kashmir.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We take every opportunity of impressing on the Government of India the need for a political process in Kashmir, which will allow the aspirations of its population to be expressed.

30. **Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the relations between the British Government and the Government of Azad Kashmir.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We maintain working contacts with the authorities of Azad Kashmir, as with the authorities of Jammu and Kashmir.

### South Africa

20. **Sir George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact he has had with the parties to the Conference for a Democratic South Africa talks in South Africa.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** As I indicated earlier, we maintain a close dialogue with all the parties in South Africa.

40. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet representatives of the African National Congress to discuss the situation in South Africa.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has already been in contact with both Mr. Mandela and President de Klerk. My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey saw Mr. Walter Sisulu, deputy president of the ANC on 26 June, and Mr. Frank Mdlalose, chairman of Inkatha Freedom party on 19 June.

23. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Republic of South Africa in the light of the Conference for a Democratic South Africa.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Before the negotiations were suspended CODESA had achieved remarkable progress in agreement on transforming South Africa into a non-racial democratic society. We are deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence and the tragic loss of life at Boipatong.

We note the South African Government's determination to bring to justice those responsible. We believe that the interests of the majority of South Africans are best served by concerted efforts to get negotiations back on track as soon as possible. The South African Government's enormous strides towards representative democracy and considerable progress already achieved at CODESA show that negotiations work.

### NATO Information Budget

21. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the level of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation information budget for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The NATO information budget for this year is about £3 million, to which the United Kingdom will contribute about £570,000.

The information budget pays for programmes which complement NATO members' national efforts to explain defence policy, and for programmes to spread NATO's message of dialogue, co-operation and collective security in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

### European Community

22. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the President of the European Commission to discuss developments in the European Community.

**Mr. Hurd:** I met the President of the Commission and other Commissioners this morning to discuss the programme for the United Kingdom presidency of the Community. There will be further meetings from time to time.

### Middle East

24. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the ambassador of Israel to discuss the middle east peace process.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last met the Israeli ambassador in February; we are in frequent contact with the Israeli Government at ministerial level to discuss the peace process.

## Japan

25. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he intends to strengthen the European Community's relations with Japan during the United Kingdom presidency.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We shall be looking to strengthen economic, political and technical co-operation with Japan, building on the 1991 EC-Japan joint declaration. This will be an important theme of the meeting which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the President of the Commission will have with the Japanese Prime Minister in London on 4 July.

29. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to meet the Prime Minister of Japan to discuss avenues for mutual co-operation.

**Mr. Goodlad:** My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will meet the Prime Minister of Japan in London on the morning of 4 July at the EC-Japan summit. This will be followed by bilateral talks between the British and Japanese Prime Ministers. We intend to use the opportunity to develop further our already close bilateral relationship with Japan and to strengthen co-operation between the EC and Japan.

## Cyprus

26. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will encourage the United Nations to help maintain the archaeological heritage located in the north of Cyprus.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so.

## EC Presidency

27. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the principal objectives of the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Council.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The United Kingdom aims to run an efficient presidency. We shall pursue discussions on the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. Key themes will include the completion of the single market, the future financing negotiations, the successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round and developing relations with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

37. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the objectives of the forthcoming United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The United Kingdom aims to run an efficient presidency. We will pursue discussions on the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. Key themes will include the completion of the single market, the future financing negotiations, preparations for enlargement negotiations, the successful conclusion of the GATT Uruguay round and developing relations with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

## Nuclear Material

28. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline the steps and initiatives he has taken to ensure redundant nuclear bomb-making material is properly stored, guarded and accounted for in eastern bloc countries.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The security of fissile material from ex-Soviet nuclear weapons is the responsibility of the Russian Government. However, we and our NATO allies have made clear that we are ready to help in various aspects of eliminating surplus nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union. As part of a wider programme of assistance, the United Kingdom has offered to advise on the safe handling, storage and conversion of fissile material. We also continue to emphasise the importance we attach to early accession to the non-proliferation treaty and application of IAEA safeguards to nuclear materials by all non-Russian republics.

## Subsidiarity

31. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has held concerning the definition of subsidiarity in the context of the Maastricht agreement; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** I refer the hon. Member to the conclusions of the meeting of the European Council held at Lisbon on 26 and 27 June, copies of which have been deposited in the Library of the House.

## Committee of the Regions

32. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held on the proposed EC committee of the regions.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The committee of the regions cannot be established before the entry into force of the treaty on European union. The Government are considering the nomination of the 24 United Kingdom members.

## Guyana

33. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to monitor the forthcoming elections in Guyana.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Guyanese Government have invited the Carter centre and Commonwealth secretariat to send observer teams to monitor the forthcoming general election. Diplomats accredited to Guyana will also be permitted access to all stages of the electoral process.

## Angola

34. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government are giving to aid the electoral processes in Angola.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We are providing bilateral assistance totalling £270,000 in support of the United Nations development programme's special project of assistance to the electoral process in Angola.

## Hong Kong

35. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to visit Hong Kong to discuss the future of the colony.

**Mr. Goodlad:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs hopes to visit Hong Kong again fairly soon.

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total number of people in Hong Kong eligible to register to vote at the recent election; and what was the percentage of those eligible to register to vote who did vote for each of the parties and groups standing for election.

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The total number of people in Hong Kong eligible to vote in the Legislative Council elections of September 1991 was 3·7 million, of whom 1·9 million registered. The turnout for the 18 directly elected seats was 39 per cent. of those registered to vote. The votes were distributed between the parties as follows:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| United Democrats | 45·14 |
| Meeting Point | 7·20 |
| Liberal Democratic Federation | 5·09 |
| Association for Democracy and Peoples Livelihood | 4·44 |
| Federation of Trade Unions | 3·28 |
| Hong Kong Citizen Forum | 2·18 |
| Kwun Tong Man Chung Friendship Promotion Association | 1·55 |
| Hong Kong Democratic Foundation | 1·44 |
| New Hong Kong Alliance | 0·87 |
| Independent Liberal Candidates | 9·35 |
| Other Groups and Independent Candidates | 19·43 |

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Public Security Bureau of China was invited to have an official presence in Hong Kong; what are the remit and jurisdictions of the Public Security Bureau in Hong Kong; how many staff are employed in the Hong Kong office of the Public Security Bureau; to whom they are accountable within the Government of Hong Kong; what access the Public Security Bureau will have to information held by the Hong Kong police; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** An agreement between the Royal Hong Kong Police (RHKP) and the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (PSB) to send one to three liaison officers to Hong Kong was announced on 9 May 1992. The aim is to enable quicker and more effective co-operation on criminal matters, particularly violent crime and smuggling, which is causing serious public concern in Hong Kong. As with the eight other countries with police liaison officers in Hong Kong, the PSB liaison officers will have no jurisdiction, constabulary powers or operational role. They will have no automatic access to information held by the RHKP.

## Malawi

36. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of Malawi in order to dicuss progress towards democracy in that country.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey met President Banda of Malawi during a private visit to the United Kingdom on 29 May last year. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister also met President Banda during the course of his visit.

## Switzerland

39. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Switzerland.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We have excellent relations with the Swiss, who are, not least, important trading partners. We have welcomed Switzerland's application to join the European Community, and during our EC presidency will work towards the opening of formal accession negotiations as soon as possible.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements negotiated between the United Kingdom and Switzerland since 1979.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Ten bilateral agreements have been negotiated between the United Kingdom and Switzerland since 1979. In the same period, 136 multilateral agreements were signed or accepted by the United Kingdom and Switzerland or accepted by the United Kingdom on behalf of dependent territories.

Copies of computer printouts giving basic details of the agreements have been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *208-9*, what information he has on bilateral and multilateral agreements between the United Kingdom and Switzerland.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has records of 123 bilateral agreements with Switzerland since the early 1800s. There are also records of well over 2,000 multilateral agreements to which the

United Kingdom is a party. All would need to be checked to ascertain Swiss involvement. This could not be done except at disproportionate cost.

### Croatia

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Croatia.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Croatia on 24 June and hope to name the first British ambassador at Zagreb shortly.

### Israel

**Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Israel.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We look forward to cooperating with the new Israeli Government when it is formed. There are important new opportunities in the peace process and we shall of course encourage Israel to make the best of these.

### Lebanese Hostages

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the Lebanese hostages, including Sheikh Obeid, held without trial and contrary to United Nations resolutions; and if he will initiate action to obtain their release.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We welcomed the release of the last western hostages. Although that particular episode is closed, we shall continue to call for the release of all those held outside the due process of law. We hope that we shall also see an accounting for those hostages who have died while in captivity.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Goodlad:** No such estimate has been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The cost of the market testing initiative since November 1991 has been £10,600 in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and £15,000 in the Overseas Development Administration. These figures do not include staff costs incurred so far. I intend, however, to monitor the full costs, including staff costs, of implementing the market testing programme.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Goodlad:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, col. *491*.

### Mozambique

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact or communication he or his officials have had with representatives of RENAMO.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** United Kingdom officials have contact with RENAMO through the forum of the joint verification commission in Maputo, of which we are members, and in our capacity as observers at the Rome peace talks. In March we began contact with RENAMO leader, Dhlakama, at senior official level in recognition of a more positive attitude by RENAMO to the peace talks in Rome, which we hope will continue. There will be no Ministerial contact with RENAMO until the negotiations have advanced considerably.

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Government have made since 1979 to the Mozambican Government about the abuse of human rights in the parts of Mozambique under its control.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** There continue to be human rights abuses in Mozambique. We have discussed human rights with the Government of Mozambique on several occasions since 1979 notably when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the matter with President Chissano during his visit to Mozambique in October 1991. We have also raised RENAMO's human rights record with RENAMO.

## LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively, and overall in his Office are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Newton:** I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) on 4 June at column *638*.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available;

(2) what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991;

(3) what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Newton:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 29 June at column *366*.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Cold Weather Payments

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates and in what parts of the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what were the periods taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Scott:** Such information as is available is in the Library.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the total cost so far of the market testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The total cost of the market testing initiative in the Department since November 1991 is estimated as some £215,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market testing programme.

**Miss Widdecombe:** No estimate of the savings has been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992 at column *102*.

### Social Fund

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total amount in allocated social fund budgets which was unspent by local DSS offices in each year of its operation expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* cash terms at 1990-91 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of the gross social fund budget; if he will list the number of local DSS offices involved; and if he will provide a breakdown by (i) region and (ii) local DSS office.

**Mr. Scott** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Information expressed in 1990-91 prices is in the tables. Real term figures have been calculated using the current GDP deflater and may alter. The balance of information requested is in the Library.

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *London North* | |
| Acton | 6,306·29 |
| Aylesbury | 80,590·18 |
| Banbury | 14,753·09 |
| Barking | 219,102·32 |
| Barnet | 15,940·20 |
| Basildon | 215,837·58 |
| Bedford | 131,395·48 |
| Braintree | 88,666·25 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 65,785·69 |
| Cambridge | 82,201·89 |
| Chelmsford | 74,383·52 |
| Clacton-on-sea | 50,441·81 |
| Colchester | 28,300·55 |
| Cricklewood | 90,110·61 |
| Diss | 32,640·34 |
| Dunstable | 78,642·68 |
| Edgware | 48,362·54 |
| Euston | 144,121·49 |
| Finsbury Park | 282,621·88 |
| Grays | 18,661·49 |
| Great Yarmouth | 4,274·77 |
| Hackney | 360,632·04 |
| Harlow | 80,615·06 |
| Harrow | 116,578·60 |
| Hemel Hempstead | 88,373·29 |
| Hertford | 15,590·48 |
| High Wycombe | 110,389·87 |
| Hoxton | 152,035·05 |
| Ilford | 260,556·06 |
| Ipswich | 17,033·91 |
| King's Lynn | 70,722·93 |
| London, Plaistow | 130,560·60 |
| London, Canning Town | 82,543·50 |
| London, Ealing | 36,436·88 |
| London, Edmonton | 68,083·68 |
| London, Harlesden | 301,049·73 |
| London, Hendon | 72,822·98 |
| London, Highgate | 97,713·47 |
| London, Leytonstone | 198,533·79 |
| London, Notting Hill | 88,440·82 |
| London, Paddington | 13,989·45 |
| London, Poplar | 89,898·43 |
| London, Stoke Newington | 126,653·96 |
| London, Tottenham | 99,221·48 |
| London, Woodgrange Park | 233,778·29 |
| London, Wood Green | 13,958·58 |
| Lowestoft | 27,066·17 |
| Luton | 112,648·46 |
| Milton Keynes | 103,030·33 |
| Neasden | 384,270·02 |
| Norwich Chantry | 111,822·03 |
| Norwich Mountergate | 156,155·75 |
| Oxford | 306,933·37 |
| Peterborough | 229,241·08 |
| Romford | 48,101·96 |
| Shoreditch | 34,722·72 |
| Southall | 155,898·26 |
| Southend on Sea | 49,868·28 |
| St. Albans | 16,096·90 |
| Stepney | 431·48 |
| Stevenage | 89,179·70 |
| Thames North | 10,381·90 |
| Uxbridge | 50,121·20 |
| Walthamstow | 37,396·82 |
| Watford | 44,697·42 |
| Total | 6,667,417·45 |
| Percentage of Gross Expenditure | 2·88 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *London South* | |
| Aldershot | 141,830·87 |
| Andover | 15,421·22 |
| Ashford | 16,469·04 |
| Basingstoke | 55,412·83 |
| Bexley | 57,140·72 |
| Bloomsbury | 121,860·74 |
| Bognor Regis | 60,076·41 |
| Bracknell | 77,711·06 |
| Brighton | 3,151·27 |
| Bromley | 69,109·22 |
| Canterbury | 1,931·48 |
| Chatham | 104,381·80 |
| Chichester | 45,589·28 |
| Crawley | 58,581·04 |
| Croydon | 131,748·94 |
| Dartford | 23,097·25 |
| Dover | 56,839·72 |
| Eastbourne | 165,710·72 |
| Eltham | 19,622·88 |
| Epsom | 57,275·22 |
| Fareham | 64,768·42 |
| Folkestone | 47,312·06 |
| Gravesend | 34,721·81 |
| Greenwich Park | 326,155·96 |
| Guildford | 79,382·01 |
| Hastings | 44,905·66 |
| Havant | 91,164·18 |
| Hither Green | 86,737·56 |
| Hounslow | 180,097·95 |
| Hove | 93,615·35 |
| Isle of Wight | 83,272·76 |
| Kingston | 104,499·83 |
| Lewes | 64,394·47 |
| London City | 65,292·47 |
| London Woolwich | 179,412·11 |
| London Balham | 131,866·88 |
| London Battersea | 112,596·36 |
| London Brixton | 211,860·73 |
| London Camberwell | 234,640·59 |
| London Chelsea | 128,886·37 |
| London Crystal Palace | 234,011·38 |
| London Kennington Park | 43,699·96 |
| London Kensington | 70,089·03 |
| London Lewisham | 446,414·86 |
| London Oval | 214,853·58 |
| London Peckham | 133,643·42 |
| London Southwark | 158,754·13 |
| London Streatham | 265,308·90 |
| London Thames South | 39,998·09 |
| London Wandsworth | 146,407·73 |
| London Westminster | 87,316·77 |
| London Wimbledon | 124,869·75 |
| Maidstone | 60,051·80 |
| Mitcham | 4,241·53 |
| New Forest | 97,570·38 |
| New Malden | 58,082·10 |
| Newbury | 65,290·34 |
| Orpington | 44,718·35 |
| Portsmouth North | 7,595·25 |
| Portsmouth South | 893·73 |
| Reading | 326,265·35 |
| Redhill | 78,231·33 |
| Rochester | 60,866·19 |
| Sittingbourne | 95,097·99 |
| Slough | 91,250·60 |
| Southampton | 245,951·58 |
| Sutton | 47,968·82 |
| Thanet | 6,969·10 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 52,376·03 |
| Twickenham | 69,948·49 |
| Winchester | 54,172·39 |
| Woking | 82,220·70 |
| Worthing | 105,393·91 |
| Total | 7,269,068·81 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 3·14 |

*Unspent Budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| | *Total (90-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| MIDLANDS | |
| Birmingham Bradford Street | 162,392·26 |
| Birmingham Edgbaston | 75,457·63 |
| Birmingham Erdington | 56,152·10 |
| Birmingham Handsworth | 187,775·74 |
| Birmingham Ladywood | 260·16 |
| Birmingham Northfield | 15,753·36 |
| Birmingham Perry Barr | 99,199·34 |
| Birmingham Ravenhurst | 43,317·40 |
| Birmingham South Yardley | 53,261·19 |
| Birmingham Sparkhill | 67,418·40 |
| Birmingham Washwood Heath | 112,287·96 |
| Boston | 71,245·04 |
| Burton on Trent | 1,828·43 |
| Cannock | 95,927·63 |
| Chesterfield | 36,114·61 |
| Corby | 54,398·57 |
| Coventry East | 187,399·11 |
| Coventry West | 235,568·39 |
| Derby Becket Street | 16,140·55 |
| Derby Heritage Gate | 38,704·18 |
| Derby London Road | 64,569·55 |
| Dudley North | 124,267·56 |
| Dudley South | 90,654·75 |
| Grantham | 76,780·33 |
| Hereford | 79,945·30 |
| Ilkeston | 58,496·14 |
| Kidderminster | 117,144·74 |
| Leamington Spa | 34,343·01 |
| Leicester Burleys Way | 71,394·24 |
| Leicester Lower Hill Street | 80,058·20 |
| Leicester Norton Street | 238,839·90 |
| Leicester Yeoman Street | 263,214·72 |
| Lichfield | 200,457·85 |
| Lincoln Newland | 60,348·73 |
| Lincoln Orchard Street | 61,459·63 |
| Loughborough | 87,113·24 |
| Mansfield | 106,868·35 |
| Newcastle (Staffordshire) | 94,425·05 |
| Northampton | 218,005·95 |
| Nottingham, Castlegate | 9,943·62 |
| Nottingham, David Lane | 22,071·93 |
| Nottingham, Shakespeare Street | 55,789·51 |
| Nottingham, Station Street | 26,175·93 |
| Nuneaton | 95,172· 27 |
| Redditch | 58,031·38 |
| Rugby | 54,354·43 |
| Shrewsbury | 155,443·85 |
| Skegness | 17,005·20 |
| Smethwick | 251,426·45 |
| Stafford | 48,703·34 |
| Stoke on Trent, North | 17,391·60 |
| Stoke on Trent, South | 15,801·54 |
| Sutton in Ashfield | 40,761·79 |
| Telford | 129,292·79 |
| Walsall, East | 27,267·73 |
| Walsall, West | 63,667·77 |
| Wellingborough | 183,950·35 |
| West Bromwich | 155,781·09 |
| Wolverhampton, North | 173,721·73 |
| Wolverhampton, South | 203,932·31 |
| Worcester | 65,031·56 |
| Worksop | 59,759·94 |
| TOTAL | 5,669,467·36 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 2·45 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *North East* | |
| Ashington | 37,618·36 |
| Barnsley East | 161,184·59 |
| Barnsley West | 219,795·31 |
| Berwick-upon-Tweed | 818·33 |
| Bishop Auckland | 155,397·65 |
| Blyth | 28,403·39 |
| Bradford East | 13,376·96 |
| Bradford South | 80,353·97 |
| Bradford West | 106,011·16 |
| Bridlington | 25,979·76 |
| Castleford | 32,272·34 |
| Chester le Street | 31,466·07 |
| Darlington | 257,074·16 |
| Dewsbury | 51,973·37 |
| Doncaster East | 0·00 |
| Doncaster West | 199,368·84 |
| Durham | 42,663·63 |
| Eston | 78,236·66 |
| Gateshead | 125,795·01 |
| Goole | 27,776·20 |
| Grimsby | 190,962·62 |
| Halifax | 4,639·20 |
| Harrogate | 130,845·93 |
| Hartlepool | 81,652·39 |
| Hemsworth | 30,387·48 |
| Hexham | 28,960·29 |
| Houghton le Spring | 32,416·35 |
| Huddersfield | 72,282·12 |
| Hull East | 13,235·29 |
| Hull West | 57,684·01 |
| Jarrow | 134,608·70 |
| Keighley | 293·31 |
| Leeds East | 38,203·56 |
| Leeds North | 141,042·95 |
| Leeds North West | 35,520·31 |
| Leeds South | 27,543·17 |
| Leeds West | 87,635·54 |
| Middlesbrough | 93,022·51 |
| Newcastle East | 72,955·10 |
| Newcastle St. James | 80,191·49 |
| Newcastle West | 41,946·71 |
| North Shields | 93,016·47 |
| Northallerton | 42,404·69 |
| Peterlee | 1,101·56 |
| Pontefract | 11,336·86 |
| Redcar | 14,007·31 |
| Rotherham North | 14,490·57 |
| Rotherham South | 7,741·53 |
| Scarborough | 48,025·73 |
| Scunthorpe | 100,572·64 |
| Seaham | 63·23 |
| Sheffield North East | 263,441·84 |
| Sheffield North West | 156,827·09 |
| Sheffield South East | 37,752·02 |
| Sheffield South West | 263,230·45 |
| Skipton | 13,009·69 |
| South Shields | 18,727·67 |
| Stanley | 55,570·63 |
| Stockton | 8,990·73 |
| Sunderland North | 293,984·87 |
| Sunderland South | 125,092·99 |
| Wakefield | 4,490·30 |
| Wallsend | 58,114·23 |
| Wath on Dearne | 99,577·23 |
| York | 25,067·05 |
| Total | 4,828,232·14 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 2·08 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *North West* | |
| Accrington | 96,496·92 |
| Ashton-under-Lyne | 17,192·01 |
| Barrow in Furness | 8,380·65 |
| Birkenhead North | 39,540·92 |
| Birkenhead South | 17,755·27 |
| Blackburn | 82,642·80 |
| Blackpool North | 39,991·21 |
| Blackpool South | 71,049·35 |
| Bolton | 144,093·39 |
| Burnley | 105,496·24 |
| Bury | 237,268·30 |
| Buxton | 6,970·04 |
| Carlisle | 16,589·48 |
| Chester | 51,936·89 |
| Crewe | 50,962·48 |
| Ellesmere Port | 85,301·84 |
| Farnworth | 40,471·73 |
| Hyde | 121,494·40 |
| Kendal | 32,732·06 |
| Lancaster | 82,652·03 |
| Leigh | 38,342·41 |
| Liverpool City | 95,731·89 |
| Liverpool Bootle | 223,251·10 |
| Liverpool Breckfield | 114,805·53 |
| Liverpool Crosby | 51,411·49 |
| Liverpool Edgehill | 95,228·61 |
| Liverpool Garston | 68,475·13 |
| Liverpool Huyton | 133,406·71 |
| Liverpool Kirkby | 219,063·10 |
| Liverpool Norris Green | 86,339·71 |
| Liverpool Toxteth | 283,089·90 |
| Liverpool West Derby | 23,299·57 |
| Liverpool Belle Vale | 30,644·62 |
| Macclesfield | 34,946·82 |
| Manchester Cheetham | 7,064·76 |
| Manchester Middleton | 50,060·27 |
| Manchester Sale | 28,026·29 |
| Manchester Central | 4,610·57 |
| Manchester Chorlton | 27,600·87 |
| Manchester Failsworth | 68,012·48 |
| Manchester Longsight | 83,596·34 |
| Manchester Openshaw | 63,071·84 |
| Manchester Rusholme | 102,663·05 |
| Manchester Wythenshawe | 60,559·14 |
| Northwich | 85,852·71 |
| Oldham | 8,358·16 |
| Penrith | 11,712·63 |
| Preston North | 44,668·85 |
| Preston South | 42,095·03 |
| Rochdale | 56,118·68 |
| Rossendale | 26,214·30 |
| Salford North | 1,145·62 |
| Salford South | 4,988·05 |
| Skelmersdale | 87,125·53 |
| Southport | 99,402·68 |
| St. Helens | 153,644·24 |
| Stockport North | 86,104·58 |
| Stockport South | 91,359·80 |
| Wallasey | 125,265·79 |
| Warrington | 189,997·30 |
| Whitehaven | 7,472·23 |
| Widnes | 91,753·32 |
| Wigan | 3,691·99 |
| Wilmslow | 7,293·44 |
| Workington | 24,937·17 |
| Total | 4,591,522·26 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 1·98 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *Scotland* | |
| Aberdeen North | 45,855·42 |
| Aberdeen South | 84,118·30 |
| Airdrie | 214,078·65 |
| Arbroath | 7,396·19 |
| Ayr | 324,067·42 |
| Bathgate | 163,635·15 |
| Bellshill | 212,547·06 |
| Campbeltown | 5,928·41 |
| Clydebank | 198,311·14 |
| Coatbridge | 184,215·93 |
| Cowdenbeath | 484·81 |
| Cumbernauld | 141,383·08 |
| Dumbarton | 146,653·49 |
| Dumfries | 46,500·19 |
| Dundee East | 61,905·22 |
| Dundee West | 60,615·12 |
| Dunfermline | 44,388·74 |
| East Kilbride | 150,950·31 |
| Edinburgh East | 33,549·20 |
| Edinburgh City | 118,248·50 |
| Edinburgh North | 77,449·01 |
| Edinburgh South | 140,413·71 |
| Edinburgh West | 98,371·04 |
| Elgin | 52,931·68 |
| Falkirk | 299,868·39 |
| Fort William | 7,941·85 |
| Galashiels | 12,087·94 |
| Glasgow Anniesland | 258,666·67 |
| Glasgow Bridgeton | 11,807·89 |
| Glasgow City | 327,002·88 |
| Glasgow Craigton | 251,561·87 |
| Glasgow Cranstonhill | 41,461·25 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 428,839·28 |
| Glasgow Maryhill | 392,656·97 |
| Glasgow Partick | 107,441·01 |
| Glasgow Provan | 10,701·95 |
| Glasgow Rutherglen | 302,137·42 |
| Glasgow Shettleston | 549,290·93 |
| Glasgow South-side | 202,166·36 |
| Glasgow Springburn | 367,953·94 |
| Greenock | 381,083·17 |
| Hamilton | 639,278·12 |
| Inverness | 36,778·53 |
| Irvine | 264,014·54 |
| Johnstone | 72,842·06 |
| Kilmarnock | 207,725·57 |
| Kirkcaldy | 112,260·38 |
| Lerwick | 8,644·25 |
| Leven | 41,599·61 |
| Motherwell | 218,426·97 |
| Oban | 32,447·83 |
| Paisley | 310,395·01 |
| Perth | 46,887·07 |
| Peterhead | 6,420·68 |
| Port Glasgow | 226,471·03 |
| Stirling | 87,660·41 |
| Stornoway | 7,514·19 |
| Stranraer | 5,208·74 |
| Wick | 26,891·94 |
| Total | 8,918,134·49 |
| Percentage of Gross Expenditure | 3·85 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1989*[1]

| *Wales and SW* | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| Aberdare | 3,874·61 |
| Abertillery | 18,139·98 |
| Aberystwyth | 29,184·36 |
| Ammanford | 3,211·44 |
| Anglesey | 49,220·68 |
| Bargoed | 54,746·60 |
| Barnstaple | 45,793·72 |
| Barry | 28,961·90 |
| Bath | 94,849·17 |
| Blackwood | 37,512·64 |
| Bournemouth | 84,050·46 |
| Bridgend | 7,473·76 |
| Bridgwater | 45,220·42 |
| Bristol Central | 49,781·01 |
| Bristol East | 57,945·61 |
| Bristol Horfield | 49,689·81 |
| Bristol South | 84,518·20 |
| Bristol West | 33,488·62 |
| Caernarfon | 4,328·37 |
| Caerphilly | 23,039·75 |
| Cardiff Central | 14,789·98 |
| Cardiff East | 25,899·38 |
| Cardiff West | 6,773·73 |
| Carmarthen | 1,686·90 |
| Cheltenham | 56,556·94 |
| Chippenham | 412·99 |
| Colwyn Bay | 55,835·97 |
| Cymbran | 70,928·53 |
| Deeside | 144·38 |
| Ebbw Vale | 54,208·68 |
| Exeter | 88,499·28 |
| Gloucester | 989,829·26 |
| Haverfordwest | 17,040·91 |
| Launceston | 41,026·78 |
| Llanelli | 57,361·45 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 71,325·15 |
| Morriston | 27,039·94 |
| Neath | 26,532·93 |
| Newport Gwent | 25,016·66 |
| Newtown | 38,865·14 |
| Pembroke Dock | 3,079·09 |
| Penzance | 157,064·52 |
| Plymouth | 112,958·30 |
| Plymouth Crownhill | 5,154·75 |
| Pontypridd | 3,001·50 |
| Poole | 135,552·50 |
| Port Talbot | 466·17 |
| Porth | 22,258·35 |
| Porthmadog | 30,715·94 |
| Rhyl | 5,203·17 |
| Salisbury | 3,576·33 |
| St. Austell | 82,298·44 |
| Stroud | 37,938·85 |
| Swansea | 0·00 |
| Swindon | 21,725·94 |
| Taunton | 105,840·59 |
| Tonypandy | 43,664·01 |
| Torbay | 281,194·59 |
| Trowbridge | 3,643·86 |
| Truro | 93,520·77 |
| Weston-Super-Mare | 33,367·49 |
| Weymouth | 52,272·21 |
| Wrexham | 82,275·93 |
| Yeovil | 24,593·25 |
| Total | 3,816,172·65 |
| Percentage of Gross Expenditure | 1·65 |
| Grand Total | 29,027,827·46 |
| Percentage of Gross Expenditure | 12·52 |

*Note:* Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *London North* | |
| Acton | 28,439·12 |
| Aylesbury | 17,889·19 |
| Banbury | 1,756·57 |
| Barking | 15,324·56 |

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| Barnet | 8,058·75 |
| Basildon | 83,143·63 |
| Bedford | 16,838·47 |
| Braintree | 1,098·99 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 7,555·72 |
| Cambridge | 38,185·48 |
| Chelmsford | 0·00 |
| Clacton-on-Sea | 1,362·72 |
| Colchester | 433·85 |
| Cricklewood | 24,133·37 |
| Diss | 10,666·45 |
| Dunstable | 25,288·92 |
| Edgware | 49·63 |
| Euston | 0·00 |
| Finsbury Park | 12,276·56 |
| Grays | 17,164·75 |
| Great Yarmouth | 85·33 |
| Hackney | 70,321·00 |
| Harlow | 39,742·27 |
| Harrow | 29,298·29 |
| Hemel Hempstead | 55,333·27 |
| Hertford | 5,10[illegible]·39 |
| High Wycombe | 15,51[illegible]·38 |
| Hoxton | 2,416·57 |
| Ilford | 41,481·74 |
| Ipswich | 1·45 |
| King's Lynn | 431·48 |
| London Plaistow | 319·73 |
| London Canning Town | 332·61 |
| London Ealing | 8,210·35 |
| London Edmonton | 161·34 |
| London Harlesden | 33,808·55 |
| London Hendon | 5,650·20 |
| London Highgate | 302·04 |
| London Leytonstone | 26,608·76 |
| London Notting Hill | 5,971·81 |
| London Paddington | 20,422·16 |
| London Poplar | 15,120·34 |
| London Stoke Newington | 5,700·64 |
| London Tottenham | 48,932·04 |
| London Woodgrange Park | 21·90 |
| London Wood Green | 85·36 |
| Lowestoft | 16,882·58 |
| Luton | 9,143·76 |
| Milton Keynes | 3,781·56 |
| Neasden | 12,634·85 |
| Norwich Chantry | 14,174·75 |
| Norwich Mountergate | 54,837·25 |
| Oxford | 39,040·15 |
| Peterborough | 1,169·06 |
| Romford | 42·97 |
| St. Albans | 5,593·43 |
| Shoreditch | 1,568·47 |
| Southall | 4,799·06 |
| Southend on Sea | 1,557·60 |
| Stepney | 4,871·05 |
| Stevenage | 846·99 |
| Thames North | 4,186·74 |
| Uxbridge | 302·04 |
| Walthamstow | 724·13 |
| Watford | 4,643·37 |
| Total | 921,853·15 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·36 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| *London South* | |
| Aldershot | 84,443·85 |
| Andover | 1,018·93 |
| Ashford | 6,032·86 |
| Basingstoke | 11,449·36 |
| Bexley | 65,887·98 |
| Bloomsbury | 59,650·21 |
| Bognor Regis | 5,339·02 |
| Bracknell | 8,998·47 |
| Brighton | 5,059·13 |
| Bromley | 3,873·48 |
| Canterbury | 2,636·31 |
| Chatham | 79,726·92 |
| Chichester | 4·86 |
| Crawley | 2,285·44 |
| Croydon | 5,915·00 |
| Dartford | 10,850·06 |
| Dover | 8,791·21 |
| Eastbourne | 50,820·82 |
| Eltham | 0·00 |
| Epsom | 12,056·83 |
| Fareham | 13,209·00 |
| Folkestone | 9,933·17 |
| Gravesend | 2,049·35 |
| Greenwich Park | 22,214·37 |
| Guildford | 28,331·25 |
| Hastings | 18,179·24 |
| Havant | 20,478·88 |
| Hither Green | 0·00 |
| Hounslow | 5,313·57 |
| Hove | 2,665·05 |
| Isle of Wight | 55·60 |
| Kingston | 47,130·77 |
| Lewes | 8,915·93 |
| London City | 16,418·64 |
| London Woolwich | 26,310·01 |
| London Balham | 0·00 |
| London Battersea | 113·25 |
| London Brixton | 79,499·76 |
| London Camberwell | 22,762·94 |
| London Chelsea | 1,579·53 |
| London Crystal Palace | 8,972·36 |
| London Kennington Park | 593·91 |
| London Kensington | 15,612·86 |
| London Lewisham | 25,422·82 |
| London Oval | 0·83 |
| London Peckham | 6,764·11 |
| London Southwark | 1,317·97 |
| London Streatham | 38,937·81 |
| London Thames South | 10,813·31 |
| London Wandsworth | 2·99 |
| London Westminster | 25,161·53 |
| London Wimbledon | 4,859·68 |
| Maidstone | 3·81 |
| Mitcham | 4,731·59 |
| New Forest | 15,918·18 |
| New Malden | 35,089·54 |
| Newbury | 25,403·72 |
| Orpington | 6,886·92 |
| Portsmouth North | 519·53 |
| Portsmouth South | 7·84 |
| Reading | 51,168·66 |
| Redhill | 2,169·57 |
| Sittingbourne | 128·84 |
| Slough | 4,175·39 |
| Southampton | 25,089·93 |
| Sutton | 30·77 |
| Thanet | 1,776·75 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 14,760·11 |
| Twickenham | 31,753·84 |
| Winchester | 21,476·79 |
| Woking | 26,134·11 |
| Worthing | 9,368·22 |
| Total | 1,165,055·32 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·45 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *Midlands* | |
| Birmingham Bradford St. | 7,668·77 |
| Birmingham Edgbaston | 3,727·60 |
| Birmingham Erdington | 19,842·32 |
| Birmingham Handsworth | 14,568·67 |
| Birmingham Ladywood | 849·77 |
| Birmingham Northfield | 4·52 |
| Birmingham Perry Barr | 10,030·94 |
| Birmingham Ravenhurst | 9,624·62 |
| Birmingham South Yardley | 3,754·46 |
| Birmingham Sparkhill | 5,299·82 |
| Birmingham Washwood Heath | 2,183·10 |
| Boston | 5,477·79 |
| Burton on Trent | 6,231·98 |
| Cannock | 2,965·24 |
| Chesterfield | 129·59 |
| Corby | 18,875·06 |
| Coventry East | 0·70 |
| Coventry West | 63,371·85 |
| Derby Becket St. | 5,874·26 |
| Derby Heritage Gate | 6,992·26 |
| Derby London Road | 12,888·68 |
| Dudley North | 28,031·39 |
| Dudley South | 3,819·52 |
| Grantham | 28,354·91 |
| Hereford | 11,636·83 |
| Ilkeston | 21,498·68 |
| Kidderminster | 8,117·31 |
| Leamington Spa | 103·66 |
| Leicester Burleys Way | 117·99 |
| Leicester Lower Hill St. | 400·64 |
| Leicester Norton St. | 40,900·13 |
| Leicester Yeoman St. | 6,318·32 |
| Lichfield | 56,391·26 |
| Lincoln Newland | 303·88 |
| Lincoln Orchard Street | 11,756·09 |
| Loughborough | 5, 957·47 |
| Mansfield | 848·74 |
| Newcastle (Staffs) | 10,420·46 |
| Northampton | 8,588·92 |
| Nottingham Castlegate | 67·30 |
| Nottingham David Lane | 6,866·31 |
| Nottingham Shakespeare Street | 1,300·50 |
| Nottingham Station Street | 15,783·93 |
| Nuneaton | 37·24 |
| Redditch | 13,705·15 |
| Rugby | 20,353·87 |
| Shrewsbury | 48,019·13 |
| Skegness | 37,401·43 |
| Smethwick | 58,664·09 |
| Stafford | 9,422·72 |
| Stoke on Trent North | 10,160·03 |
| Stoke on Trent South | 3,525·87 |
| Sutton in Ashfield | 6,209·82 |
| Telford | 0·00 |
| Walsall East | 3,343·30 |
| Walsall West | 2,562·54 |
| Wellingborough | 83·02 |
| West Bromwich | 899·90 |
| Wolverhampton North | 64,627·48 |
| Wolverhampton South | 33,716·23 |
| Worcester | 43,062·10 |
| Worksop | 104·64 |
| Total | 823,844·81 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·32 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *North East* | |
| Ashington | 51·58 |
| Barnsley East | 34·24 |
| Barnsley West | 37,767·27 |
| Berwick on Tweed | 789·19 |
| Bishop Auckland | 727·56 |
| Blyth | 2,485·52 |
| Bradford East | 192·36 |
| Bradford South | 9,751·90 |
| Bradford West | 12,013·26 |
| Bridlington | 9·33 |
| Castleford | 3,496·27 |
| Chester le Street | 711·26 |
| Darlington | 13,182·96 |
| Dewsbury | 6·20 |
| Doncaster East | 15,712·27 |
| Doncaster West | 52,430·51 |
| Durham | 222·22 |
| Eston | 1,222·30 |
| Gateshead | 212·68 |
| Goole | 9,794·40 |
| Grimsby | 23,410·93 |
| Halifax | 0·00 |
| Harrogate | 21,756·22 |
| Hartlepool | 15,957·58 |
| Hemsworth | 8,563·95 |
| Hexham | 10,169·37 |
| Houghton le Spring | 4,184·49 |
| Huddersfield | 366·72 |
| Hull East | 5,450·32 |
| Hull West | 183·17 |
| Jarrow | 2,671·17 |
| Keighley | 2,368·34 |
| Leeds East | 66·80 |
| Leeds North | 678·16 |
| Leeds North West | 16,524·51 |
| Leeds South | 4,688·79 |
| Leeds West | 18,207·69 |
| Middlesbrough | 122·37 |
| Newcastle East | 0·66 |
| Newcastle St. James | 1,380·46 |
| Newcastle West | 6·87 |
| North Shields | 810·02 |
| Northallerton | 5,005·06 |
| Peterlee | 202·75 |
| Pontefract | 34·51 |
| Redcar | 3,855·71 |
| Rotherham North | 81·98 |
| Rotherham South | 1·22 |
| Scarborough | 4,736·47 |
| Scunthorpe | 1,367·11 |
| Seaham | 150·45 |
| Sheffield North East | 4,693·94 |
| Sheffield North West | 5,788·89 |
| Sheffield South East | 311·02 |
| Sheffield South West | 45,297·45 |
| Skipton | 476·63 |
| South Shields | 1,805·34 |
| Stanley | 217·49 |
| Stockton | 3,601·20 |
| Sunderland North | 18,127·37 |
| Sunderland South | 12,538·71 |
| Wakefield | 6,728·51 |
| Wallsend | 0·00 |
| Wath on Dearne | 175·13 |
| York | 2,998·86 |
| Total | 416,577·69 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·16 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | *Total (1990-91 prices)* |
|---|---|
| *North West* | |
| Accrington | 20,394·74 |
| Ashton-under-Lyne | 15,210·09 |
| Barrow in Furness | 0·00 |

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| Birkenhead North | 5·83 |
| Birkenhead South | 123·64 |
| Blackburn | 18,429·46 |
| Blackpool North | 559·09 |
| Blackpool South | 18,641·47 |
| Bolton | 3,868·83 |
| Burnley | 10,732·51 |
| Bury | 40,052·22 |
| Buxton | 229·71 |
| Carlisle | 5,819·32 |
| Chester | 10,607·77 |
| Crewe | 15,856·85 |
| Ellesmere Port | 188·26 |
| Farnworth | 0·00 |
| Hyde | 31,133·17 |
| Kendal | 8,865·11 |
| Lancaster | 30·28 |
| Leigh | 15,345·27 |
| Liverpool City | 46,445·89 |
| Liverpool Bootle | 48,932·77 |
| Liverpool Breckfield | 11,253·09 |
| Liverpool Crosby | 20,638·37 |
| Liverpool Edgehill | 3,870·30 |
| Liverpool Garston | 5·01 |
| Liverpool Huyton | 25,365·48 |
| Liverpool Kirkby | 9,450·65 |
| Liverpool Norris Green | 53·11 |
| Liverpool Toxteth | 8,805·40 |
| Liverpool West Derby | 48·52 |
| Liverpool Belle Vale | 895·09 |
| Macclesfield | 2,866·24 |
| Manchester Cheetham | 20·52 |
| Manchester Middleton | 9,783·37 |
| Manchester Sale | 32·76 |
| Manchester Central | 0·00 |
| Manchester Chorlton | 1,998·42 |
| Manchester Failsworth | 0·26 |
| Manchester Longsight | 15,410·94 |
| Manchester Openshaw | 6·25 |
| Manchester Rusholme | 44·62 |
| Manchester Wythenshawe | 728·97 |
| Northwich | 2,697·52 |
| Oldham | 18,056·00 |
| Penrith | 5,852·33 |
| Preston North | 179·68 |
| Preston South | 39,614·65 |
| Rochdale | 26·65 |
| Rossendale | 579·40 |
| St. Helens | 6·46 |
| Salford North | 6,699·22 |
| Salford South | 1,262·69 |
| Skelmersdale | 22·40 |
| Southport | 29,677·54 |
| Stockport North | 8,669·43 |
| Stockport South | 13,103·91 |
| Wallasey | 17,270·92 |
| Warrington | 7,772·67 |
| Whitehaven | 473·13 |
| Widnes | 5,640·29 |
| Wigan | 145·00 |
| Wilmslow | 95·08 |
| Workington | 12,654·77 |
| TOTAL | 593,249·40 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·23 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| *Scotland* | |
| Aberdeen North | 26,909·43 |
| Aberdeen South | 5,268·08 |
| Airdrie | 41·49 |
| Arbroath | 2,271·39 |
| Ayr | 28,895·36 |
| Bathgate | 97·83 |
| Bellshill | 11·89 |
| Campbeltown | 0·08 |
| Clydebank | 5,764·24 |
| Coatbridge | 11,528·26 |
| Cowdenbeath | 3·45 |
| Cumbernauld | 31,700·98 |
| Dumbarton | 17,708·87 |
| Dumfries | 14,255·65 |
| Dundee East | 3,365·57 |
| Dundee West | 49·46 |
| Dunfermline | 11·40 |
| East Kilbride | 1,194·47 |
| Edinburgh East | 145·29 |
| Edinburgh City | 0·00 |
| Edinburgh North | 6·19 |
| Edinburgh South | 18,162·03 |
| Edinburgh West | 13,326·78 |
| Elgin | 2,569·20 |
| Falkirk | 892·06 |
| Fort William | 0·00 |
| Galashiels | 3,052·40 |
| Glasgow Anniesland | 89,410·29 |
| Glasgow Bridgeton | 16,715·43 |
| Glasgow City | 2,641·67 |
| Glasgow Craigton | 32,715·48 |
| Glasgow Cranstonhill | 12,951·65 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 19,079·73 |
| Glasgow Maryhill | 42,115·30 |
| Glasgow Partick | 7·24 |
| Glasgow Provan | 987·20 |
| Glasgow Rutherglen | 37,691·64 |
| Glasgow Shettleston | 95,686·40 |
| Glasgow South-side | 17·62 |
| Glasgow Springburn | 19,209·17 |
| Greenock | 8·16 |
| Hamilton | 12,527·14 |
| Inverness | 8,534·53 |
| Irvine | 60,288·52 |
| Johnstone | 11,130·42 |
| Kilmarnock | 8,093·01 |
| Kirkcaldy | 2,105·72 |
| Lerwick | 2,882·96 |
| Leven | 62·87 |
| Motherwell | 0·60 |
| Oban | 7,737·38 |
| Paisley | 61,244·70 |
| Perth | 105·80 |
| Peterhead | 3,526·20 |
| Port Glasgow | 15,158·70 |
| Stirling | 2,801·66 |
| Stornoway | 1,047·15 |
| Stranraer | 5,163·23 |
| Wick | 3,803·13 |
| Total | 762,622·57 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·29 |

*Unspent budget allocations March 1990*[1]

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| *Wales and South West* | |
| Aberdare | 3,128·83 |
| Abertillery | 1,092·60 |
| Aberystwyth | 3,338·00 |
| Ammanford | 2,984·98 |
| Anglesey | 19,395·94 |
| Bargoed | 3,744·14 |
| Barnstaple | 3,255·27 |
| Barry | 2,029·89 |
| Bath | 11,777·03 |
| Blackwood | 0·84 |

| | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| Bournemouth | 8,222·91 |
| Bridgend | 372·76 |
| Bridgwater | 4,542·97 |
| Bristol Central | 123·42 |
| Bristol East | 8,710·29 |
| Bristol Horfield | 3,796·69 |
| Bristol South | 7,707·26 |
| Bristol West | 3,650·65 |
| Caernarfon | 946·06 |
| Caerphilly | 1,076·48 |
| Cardiff Central | 37·93 |
| Cardiff East | 28,844·91 |
| Cardiff West | 5,870·55 |
| Carmarthen | 1,348·66 |
| Cheltenham | 23,042·49 |
| Chippenham | 291·67 |
| Colwyn Bay | 8,686·25 |
| Cwmbran | 16,379·12 |
| Deeside | 0·00 |
| Ebbw Vale | 17,978·11 |
| Exeter | 23,866·95 |
| Gloucester | 92,723·82 |
| Haverfordwest | 211·22 |
| Launceston | 912·60 |
| Llanelli | 397·13 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 207·54 |
| Morriston | 3,390·44 |
| Neath | 1,419·19 |
| Newport Gwent | 6,373·84 |
| Newtown | 8,034·34 |
| Pembroke Dock | 443·90 |
| Penzance | 42,376·10 |
| Plymouth | 11,453·72 |
| Plymouth Crownhill | 0·00 |
| Pontypridd | 4,561·96 |
| Poole | 5,090·63 |
| Port Talbot | 21·35 |
| Porth | 4,914·22 |
| Porthmadog | 32,735·95 |
| Phyl | 16,387·59 |
| St. Austell | 21,292·46 |
| Salisbury | 1,256·77 |
| Stroud | 511·53 |
| Swansea | 0·00 |
| Swindon | 389·04 |
| Taunton | 11,679·92 |
| Tonypandy | 26,823·70 |
| Torbay | 15,082·30 |
| Trowbridge | 8,640·21 |
| Truro | 57·36 |
| Weston-super-Mare | 8,200·58 |
| Weymouth | 226·65 |
| Wrexham | 2,865·71 |
| Yeovil | 7,357·61 |
| Total | 552,283·08 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·21 |
| Grand Total | 5,235,486·02 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 2·02 |

*Note:* Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

*Unspent Budget allocations March 1992*[1]

| District name | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| Bankside | 85·49 |
| Barking and Havering | 26·45 |
| Barnet | 8,872·95 |
| Barnsley | 2·30 |
| Bedfordshire | 2,483·53 |
| Berkshire | 111·98 |
| Birmingham Chamberlain | 88·77 |
| Birmingham Heartlands | 0·40 |
| Birmingham North West | 23·53 |
| Birmingham South East | 35,997·67 |
| Birmingham South West | 91·14 |
| Blackburn and Accrington | 185·08 |
| Blackpool | 57·09 |
| Bolton | 276·90 |
| Bradford | 1,602·40 |
| Bristol Severnside | 41,838·59 |
| Brunel | 0·00 |
| Buckinghamshire | 47,659·90 |
| Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale | 58·50 |
| Cambridgeshire | 13,993·36 |
| Canterbury and Thanet | 26,062·39 |
| Central Derbyshire | 15,482·12 |
| Central Staffordshire | 12·07 |
| Channel | 16,246·57 |
| Cheshire North West and Central | 0·00 |
| Cheshire East | 0·97 |
| Chesterfield and Worksop | 22·97 |
| City East | 17·91 |
| Clyde Coast and Cowal | 45·67 |
| Coatbridge | 12·59 |
| Cornwall | 75·83 |
| Coventry | 0·00 |
| Cumbria North | 166·50 |
| Cynon Merthyr Rhymney Valley | 1,803·09 |
| Derbyshire North | 22·97 |
| Derbyshire South | 6·04 |
| Devonia | 134·37 |
| Doncaster | 25,484·78 |
| Dorset | 1,605·06 |
| Durham North | 4,946·46 |
| Durham South | 43,115·86 |
| Ealing | 5·66 |
| East Lowlands | 717·44 |
| East Nottinghamshire | ERR |
| East Sussex | 30,048·11 |
| Essex South East | 0·03 |
| Essex South West | 29,285·27 |
| Euston | 0·45 |
| Fife | 6·27 |
| Forth Valley | 4·44 |
| Fulham | 7,840·92 |
| Glamorgan South | 267·75 |
| Glasgow South West | 4·16 |
| Glasgow Anniesland | 793·29 |
| Glasgow City | 19·06 |
| Glasgow East | 36,609·38 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 21,562·21 |
| Gloucester | 695·23 |
| Grampian and Shetland | 6,941·18 |
| Gwent North and Brecon | 18,388·03 |
| Gwyneddigion | 48,448·43 |
| Hackney and Islington | 326·20 |
| Halifax | 7·53 |
| Hampshire North | 2,705·83 |
| Harrow and Hillingdon | 9,225·05 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 38,173·56 |
| Highlands and Islands | 1,568·24 |
| Hounslow and Kingston | 328·92 |
| Hull | 7·29 |
| Irvine | 19,842·47 |
| Kent North | 23·59 |
| Kirkless | 0·17 |
| Knowsley | 683·35 |
| Lancaster | 4·80 |
| Lea Roding | 3·69 |
| Leaside | 88,016·32 |
| Leeds North | 16,598·45 |
| Leeds South | 102·89 |
| Leicestershire North | 14,097·96 |
| Lewisham and Brixton | 2,507·33 |
| Lincolnshire | 79,420·49 |
| Liverpool Central | 26,615·54 |
| Liverpool North | 15·32 |
| Liverpool South | 17·64 |
| Lomond and Argyll | 323·11 |
| London Central | 1,833·64 |

| District name | Total (1990-91 prices) |
|---|---|
| Lothian Central | 0·01 |
| Lothian West | 34·10 |
| Manchester Central | 19·08 |
| Manchester North | 26·21 |
| Mid Wales and Maelor | 29,122·79 |
| Motherwell | 19,828·19 |
| Neasden | 13,240·09 |
| Newcastle Upon Tyne | 31·84 |
| Newham | 0·00 |
| North and East Hertfordshire | 8,039·58 |
| North Essex | 643·04 |
| North Staffordshire | 0·61 |
| North Tyneside | 9,362·08 |
| North Wales Coast | 38,885·54 |
| North Yorkshire | 20,295·92 |
| Northamptonshire | 19,076·49 |
| Northumberland | 86·11 |
| Norwich | 5,032·41 |
| Nottinghamshire North | 8,139·65 |
| Nottinghamshire West | 6,796·07 |
| Ogwr Afan Nedd | 2·57 |
| Oldham | 0·78 |
| Oxfordshire | 5·23 |
| Preston | 4·17 |
| Renfrew | 3,741·82 |
| Rother and Dearne | 382·79 |
| South East Hants and Isle of Wight | 32·30 |
| Salford | 11,398·31 |
| Sandwell | 6·29 |
| Sefton | 5,513·37 |
| Sheffield East | 968·23 |
| Sheffield West | 30,085·84 |
| Shettleston | 36,609·38 |
| Shropshire | 0·07 |
| Solent and Forest | 13,319·57 |
| Somerset | 7,525·54 |
| South Cheshire | 1,279·10 |
| South Devon | 50,434·58 |
| South Downs | 6,556·07 |
| South Gwent and Islwyn | 1·87 |
| South Humberside | 3·49 |
| South Leicestershire | 0·01 |
| South Manchester | 37·41 |
| South West Lancs | 0·00 |
| South West Scotland | 30,910·15 |
| South West Thames | 1·36 |
| Springburn | 3·86 |
| Stockport | 250·39 |
| Suffolk | 1·78 |
| Surrey Downs | 7,892·43 |
| Surrey North | 5,346·64 |
| Swansea | 28·23 |
| Taff Rhondda | 6·89 |
| Tameside | 26·39 |
| Tayside | 5·94 |
| Tees North | 3,471·36 |
| Tees South | 1·59 |
| Thameside | 10,515·41 |
| Tyneside | 20,066·67 |
| Wakefield | 612·67 |
| Wales West | 470·33 |
| Walsall | 0·00 |
| Warwickshire | 4,456·30 |
| Wearside | 3,785·11 |
| West Herts | 8,838·76 |
| West Kent | 8,482·97 |
| West Lincolnshire | 34·15 |
| West Pennine | 87·70 |
| West Sussex | 1,408·21 |
| Wigan and Leigh | 81·93 |
| Wiltshire | 0·00 |
| Wirral | 140·19 |
| Wolverhampton | 32,737·21 |
| Worcestershire North | 40,511·15 |
| Yorkshire East | 9·25 |
| TOTAL | 1,333,943·95 |
| Percentage of gross expenditure | 0·42 |

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the *(a)* total number and *(b)* percentage of eligible applicants who have been awarded a social fund loan in each year since its introduction; and if he will provide a breakdown by *(a)* region and *(b)* DSS office.

**Mr. Scott** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Such information as is available is in the tables. For 1988-89 and 1989-90 only regional summaries are available.

| Region | Number of awards | Percentage of eligible applicants awarded a loan |
|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | | |
| Wales and SW | 101,631 | 91·94 |
| Scotland | 165,019 | 89·70 |
| Midlands | 125,850 | 93·80 |
| North West | 150,963 | 88·30 |
| North East | 163,410 | 88·30 |
| London North | 93,844 | 97·40 |
| London South | 78,692 | 97·70 |
| 1989-90 | | |
| Wales and SW | 114,390 | 88·10 |
| Scotland | 192,067 | 86·90 |
| Midlands | 138,704 | 90·00 |
| North West | 172,924 | 86·10 |
| North East | 190,315 | 85·10 |
| London North | 115,873 | 92·10 |
| London South | 102,907 | 92·60 |

The 1990-91 information for DSS local offices and 1991-92 information for Benefits Agency districts is in the tables.

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Aberdare | 1,905 | 88·11285846 |
| Aberdeen North ILO | 3,270 | 91·8797415 |
| Aberdeen South | 2,592 | 94·04934688 |
| Abertillery | 803 | 73·06642402 |
| Aberystwyth | 1,001 | 95·51526718 |
| Accrington | 1,224 | 91·82295574 |
| Airdrie Local Office | 5,337 | 95·88573482 |
| Aldershot | 830 | 89·92416035 |
| Ammanford | 813 | 91·76072235 |
| Andover | 1,042 | 87·05096074 |
| Anglesey | 1,457 | 84·31712963 |
| Arbroath | 1,213 | 85·78500707 |
| Ashford | 1,516 | 88·44807468 |
| Ashington ILO | 2,315 | 95·66115702 |
| Ashton-under-Lyne | 2,114 | 84·3575419 |
| Aylesbury | 927 | 88·36987607 |
| Ayr | 5,900 | 84·15347311 |
| Banbury | 913 | 83·45521024 |
| Bargoed | 1,542 | 75·99802859 |
| Barking | 1,601 | 79·69138875 |
| Barnet | 646 | 90·73033708 |
| Barnsley East | 3,567 | 91·62599538 |
| Barnsley West BO | 2,256 | 95·14972585 |
| Barnstaple | 1,409 | 84·77737665 |
| Barrow in Furness | 1,298 | 87·17259906 |
| Barry | 1,774 | 78·7394585 |
| Basildon | 3,389 | 97·44105808 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Basingstoke | 673 | 82·4754902 |
| Bath | 2,478 | 91·40538547 |
| Bathgate | 5,505 | 90·02452984 |
| Bedford | 1,824 | 92·63585576 |
| Bellshill Area Office | 2,950 | 89·09694956 |
| Berwick on Tweed | 328 | 87·70053476 |
| Birkenhead North | 6,363 | 84·51321557 |
| Birkenhead South | 2,721 | 84·52935694 |
| Birmingham Edgbaston | 3,261 | 89·90901572 |
| Birmingham Erdington | 3,831 | 91·34477825 |
| Birmingham Handsworth | 4,702 | 92·86984002 |
| Birmingham Ladywood | 2,954 | 88·89557629 |
| Birmingham Northfield | 3,389 | 90·44568989 |
| Birmingham Perry Barr | 2,647 | 88·0572189 |
| Birmingham Ravenhurst ILO | 2,836 | 89·07035176 |
| Birmingham South Yardley ILO | 3,155 | 87·66323979 |
| Birmingham Sparkhill ILO | 958 | 90·8056872 |
| Birmingham Washwood Heath | 2,501 | 87·05186216 |
| Bishop Auckland ILO | 3,475 | 82·93556086 |
| Blackburn | 3,002 | 90·23143974 |
| Blackpool North | 3,230 | 90·4508541 |
| Blackpool South | 1,054 | 94·86948695 |
| Blackwood | 872 | 80·96564531 |
| Blyth | 2,159 | 81·25705683 |
| Bognor Regis | 1,320 | 90·34907598 |
| Bolton | 5,532 | 92·5083612 |
| Boston ILO | 799 | 84·1938883 |
| Bournemouth | 3,788 | 92·57086999 |
| Bracknell | 1,281 | 93·2993445 |
| Bradford East | 4,644 | 87·8214826 |
| Bradford South | 3,522 | 85·46469304 |
| Bradford West | 3,700 | 90·06815969 |
| Braintree | 1,228 | 92·67924528 |
| Bridgend | 2,007 | 81·3538711 |
| Bridgwater | 1,681 | 92·10958904 |
| Bridlington | 1,355 | 87·41935484 |
| Brighton ILO | 5,495 | 92·43061396 |
| Bristol Central | 2,490 | 85·36167295 |
| Bristol East | 2,832 | 91·97791491 |
| Bristol Horfield | 1,517 | 89·76331361 |
| Bristol South | 3,474 | 89·6516129 |
| Bristol West | 1,257 | 93·45724907 |
| Bromley | 1,186 | 92·80125196 |
| Burnley | 3,181 | 85·35014757 |
| Burton | 1,013 | 92·51141553 |
| Bury | 1,624 | 93,33333333 |
| Bury St. Edmunds | 1,704 | 93,47229841 |
| Buxton | 494 | 90·80882353 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Caernarfon | 1,450 | 84·54810496 |
| Caerphilly | 2,565 | 86·94915254 |
| Cambridge | 2,212 | 94·77292202 |
| Campbeltown | 440 | 85·9375 |
| Cannock ILO | 1,310 | 93·23843416 |
| Canterbury | 1,875 | 90·66731141 |
| Cardiff Central | 2,304 | 87·57126568 |
| Cardiff East | 3,815 | 77·10185934 |
| Cardiff West | 5,025 | 88·28179902 |
| Carlisle | 2,145 | 86·94770977 |
| Carmarthen | 924 | 88·16793893 |
| Castleford ILO | 1,448 | 86·5511058 |
| Chatham | 1,914 | 91·18627918 |
| Chelmsford | 788 | 93·58669834 |
| Cheltenham | 1,075 | 84·37990581 |
| Chester | 2,391 | 89·01712584 |
| Chester le Street | 1,295 | 82·32676414 |
| Chesterfield | 4,108 | 93·19419238 |
| Chichester | 646 | 96·27421759 |
| Chippenham | 1,086 | 82·8375286 |
| Clacton-on-sea | 1,486 | 93·81313131 |
| Clydebank ILO | 3,367 | 89·85855351 |
| Coatbridge | 2,914 | 90·6940554 |
| Colchester | 1,967 | 89·04481666 |
| Colwyn Bay | 1,327 | 86·16883117 |
| Corby | 1,093 | 90·93178037 |
| Coventry East | 6,474 | 88·28583117 |
| Coventry West | 3,019 | 96·29984051 |
| Cowdenbeath ILO | 1,933 | 90·36933146 |
| Crawley | 1,372 | 90·20381328 |
| Crewe | 2,083 | 84·91642886 |
| Croydon | 2,106 | 82·75049116 |
| Crystal Palace | 2,245 | 93·58065861 |
| Cumbernauld | 3,730 | 91·13119961 |
| Cwmbran | 2,603 | 84·70549951 |
| Darlington | 3,295 | 86·2565445 |
| Dartford | 1,122 | 90·77669903 |
| Deeside | 1,024 | 87·29752771 |
| Derby Becket St. ILO | 2,638 | 88·31603616 |
| Derby Heritage Gate | 1,267 | 97·23714505 |
| Derby London Road | 3,106 | 93·13343328 |
| Dewsbury ILO | 2,755 | 84·3797856 |
| Diss ILO | 292 | 93·89067524 |
| Doncaster East | 3,325 | 88·66666667 |
| Doncaster West | 2,410 | 96·05420486 |
| Dover | 1,560 | 91·01516919 |
| Dudley North | 2,731 | 89·54098361 |
| Dudley South | 1,496 | 92·5170068 |
| Dumbarton ILO | 3,625 | 87·244284 |
| Dumfries ILO | 1,597 | 83·78803778 |
| Dundee East | 3,159 | 85·28617711 |
| Dundee West | 3,422 | 84·76591528 |
| Dunfermline | 2,370 | 86·24454148 |
| Dunstable | 770 | 94·3627451 |
| Durham ILO | 1,329 | 85·96377749 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| East Kilbride ILO | 1,550 | 90·80257762 |
| Eastbourne | 1,009 | 96·18684461 |
| Ebbw Vale | 1,404 | 87·58577667 |
| Edgware | 1,488 | 80·91353997 |
| Edinburgh (East) ILO | 3,816 | 86·7864453 |
| Edinburgh City | 5,018 | 94·11102776 |
| Edinburgh North | 3,600 | 90·52049283 |
| Edinburgh South | 2,956 | 88·95576286 |
| Edinburgh West | 3,348 | 92·02858714 |
| Elgin ILO | 2,103 | 92·11563732 |
| Ellesmere Port | 1,309 | 87·73458445 |
| Epsom | 329 | 98·50299401 |
| Eston | 2,228 | 79·77085571 |
| Euston Do | 4,812 | 86·54676259 |
| Exeter | 3,402 | 94·2121296 |
| Falkirk | 4,259 | 82·41099071 |
| Fareham | 1,580 | 89·61996597 |
| Farnworth | 1,432 | 82·77456647 |
| Folkestone | 1,097 | 88·61066236 |
| Fort William | 372 | 89·42307692 |
| Fulham Do | 1,113 | 94·5624469 |
| Galashiels | 1,620 | 91·83673469 |
| Gateshead | 4,523 | 87·08124759 |
| Glasgow Anniesland ILO | 5,225 | 86·95290398 |
| Glasgow Bridgeton | 4,819 | 83·47479647 |
| Glasgow City ILO | 4,227 | 87·49741254 |
| Glasgow Craigton ILO | 5,896 | 95·6676943 |
| Glasgow Cranstonhill | 2,668 | 88·72630529 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 5,373 | 95·94642857 |
| Glasgow Maryhill | 4,756 | 94·70330546 |
| Glasgow Partick ILO | 2,914 | 90·89207735 |
| Glasgow Provan ILO | 9,377 | 87·72569932 |
| Glasgow Rutherglen | 8,174 | 88·3866782 |
| Glasgow Shettleston | 5,289 | 91·14251249 |
| Glasgow South-Side ILO | 7,054 | 84·34772211 |
| Glasgow Springburn | 8,424 | 88·61771513 |
| Gloucester | 2,163 | 94·28945074 |
| Goole ILO | 792 | 90·82568807 |
| Grantham | 844 | 96·45714286 |
| Gravesend | 970 | 87·7034358 |
| Grays | 2,028 | 94·23791822 |
| Great Yarmouth | 1,773 | 81·36759982 |
| Greenock ILO | 4,881 | 87·17628148 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Grimsby | 4,144 | 81·8487063 |
| Guildford | 1,119 | 95·23404255 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Halifax | 3,348 | 87·11943794 |
| Hamilton ILO | 5,969 | 91·31099893 |
| Harlow | 1,457 | 91·63522013 |
| Harrogate | 993 | 96·12778316 |
| Harrow | 1,093 | 88·3589329 |
| Hartlepool | 2,755 | 79·53233256 |
| Hastings | 2,183 | 92·03204047 |
| Havant | 1,644 | 90·72847682 |
| Haverfordwest | 1,428 | 88·42105263 |
| Hemel Hempstead ILO | 887 | 99·3281075 |
| Hemsworth ILO | 1,433 | 82·78451762 |
| Hereford ILO | 1,651 | 97·92408066 |
| Hertford | 1,592 | 93·53701528 |
| Hexham | 336 | 95·45454545 |
| High Wycombe | 1,085 | 92·34042553 |
| Houghton le Spring | 1,449 | 81·63380282 |
| Hounslow | 2,860 | 92·16886884 |
| Hove | 1,474 | 91·26934985 |
| Huddersfield ILO | 4,157 | 88·84377004 |
| Hull East ILO | 5,517 | 89·7510981 |
| Hull West | 5,442 | 85·17764908 |
| Hyde | 3,108 | 89·93055556 |
| Ilford | 1,479 | 98·20717131 |
| Ilkeston | 2,090 | 90·20284851 |
| Inverness | 3,127 | 90·95404305 |
| Ipswich | 3,022 | 88·83009994 |
| Irvine | 3,896 | 85·94749614 |
| Isle of Wight | 1,703 | 90·48884166 |
| Jarrow ILO | 2,976 | 87·81351431 |
| Johnstone | 2,080 | 81·34532655 |
| Keighley ILO | 2,111 | 90·56199056 |
| Kendal | 408 | 96·45390071 |
| Kidderminster | 1,641 | 93·9862543 |
| Kilmarnock ILO | 2,801 | 86·55747837 |
| King's Lynn | 2,382 | 89·54887218 |
| Kingston | 958 | 95·99198397 |
| Kirkcaldy ILO | 2,963 | 88·31594635 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Lancaster | 2,827 | 89·71754998 |
| Launceston | 739 | 92·49061327 |
| Leamington Spa ILO | 1,546 | 88·44393593 |
| Leeds East ILO | 4,544 | 88·1645324 |
| Leeds North ILO | 5,024 | 92·2850845 |
| Leeds North West | 3,643 | 91·41781681 |
| Leeds South | 1,972 | 85·62744247 |
| Leeds West | 1,971 | 86·63736264 |
| Leicester Burleys Way | 1,685 | 92·07650273 |
| Leicester Lower Hill Street | 2,251 | 88·032851 |
| Leicester Norton Street | 3,024 | 92·87469287 |
| Leicester (Yeoman) Street | 3,617 | 95·10912438 |
| Leigh | 1,551 | 85·92797784 |
| Lerwick ILO | 275 | 94·50171821 |
| Leven ILO | 1,588 | 76·56702025 |
| Lewes | 871 | 96·13686534 |
| Lichfield | 1,618 | 92·24629418 |
| Lincoln Newland | 2,434 | 92·05748865 |
| Lincoln Orchard Street | 2,669 | 89·5036888 |
| Liverpool City | 3,583 | 95·49573561 |
| Liverpool Bootle | 4,060 | 86·67805295 |
| Liverpool Breckfield ILO | 4,858 | 86·27242053 |
| Liverpool Crosby | 2,785 | 86·08964451 |
| Liverpool Edgehill | 5,435 | 85·7661354 |
| Liverpool Garston | 1,936 | 82·45315162 |
| Liverpool Huyton | 5,109 | 90·8751334 |
| Liverpool Kirkby | 4,997 | 84·68056262 |
| Liverpool Norris Green | 2,630 | 83·65139949 |
| Liverpool Toxteth | 6,766 | 88·96778435 |
| Liverpool West Derby | 1,278 | 85·54216867 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Liverpool (Belle) Vale ILO | 2,884 | 84·77366255 |
| Llanelli | 2,223 | 83·07174888 |
| London Plaistow | 1,906 | 88·65116279 |
| London Balham | 2,869 | 97·22128092 |
| London Battersea | 2,148 | 92·78617711 |
| London Bloomsbury | 959 | 100 |
| London Brixton | 978 | 91·83098592 |
| London Camberwell | 2,224 | 95·61478934 |
| London Canning Town | 1,724 | 85·05180069 |
| London City | 396 | 95·88377724 |
| London Cricklewood | 1,521 | 92·74390244 |
| London Ealing | 6,501 | 85·65217391 |
| London Edmonton | 2,862 | 91·49616368 |
| London Hackney | 2,714 | 91·87542316 |
| London Harlesden | 2,000 | 91·15770283 |
| London Hendon | 1,354 | 82·21007893 |
| London Hoxton ILO | 2,092 | 90·87749783 |
| London Kennington Park | 2,243 | 86·6023166 |
| London Lewisham | 3,338 | 90·97846825 |
| London Leytonstone | 1,862 | 94·18310572 |
| London Peckham | 2,106 | 85·8190709 |
| London Poplar | 2,168 | 77·04335466 |
| London Shoreditch | 2,316 | 90·29239766 |
| London Southwark | 2,565 | 88·29604131 |
| London Stepney | 1,290 | 87·04453441 |
| London Stoke Newington | 1,655 | 94·95123351 |
| London Streatham | 2,033 | 95·85101367 |
| London Thames North | 819 | 91·40625 |
| London Thames South | 803 | 98·52760736 |
| London Tottenham | 4,456 | 91·10611327 |
| London Walthamstow | 1,738 | 85·07097406 |
| London Wandsworth | 1,136 | 88·0620155 |
| London Westminster | 1,028 | 94·39853076 |
| London Wimbledon | 1,116 | 90·07263923 |
| London Wood Green | 1,744 | 77·78768956 |
| London Woodgrange Park | 2,190 | 89·71732896 |
| London Woolwich | 3,846 | 86·11733094 |
| Loughborough | 1,245 | 93·25842697 |
| Lowestoft | 1,941 | 98·22874494 |
| Luton | 2,037 | 79·16828605 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Macclesfield | 934 | 94·05840886 |
| Maidstone | 1,601 | 83·29864724 |
| Manchester Cheetham | 2,856 | 79·97759731 |
| Manchester Middleton | 2,237 | 85·25152439 |
| Manchester Central | 1,702 | 92·24932249 |
| Manchester Chorlton | 2,794 | 91·21776037 |
| Manchester Failsworth | 4,774 | 92·69902913 |
| Manchester Longsight | 3,604 | 93·95203337 |
| Manchester Openshaw | 3,465 | 88·1006865 |
| Manchester Rusholme | 3,366 | 97·59350536 |
| Manchester Sale | 1,612 | 87·56110809 |
| Manchester Wythenshawe | 6,642 | 89·62353259 |
| Mansfield | 2,843 | 91·35604113 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 2,069 | 78·2526475 |
| Middlesbrough | 6,881 | 80·08612663 |
| Milton Keynes | 3,706 | 95·36798765 |
| Mitcham | 898 | 76·62116041 |
| Morriston | 1,870 | 83·51942832 |
| Motherwell ILO | 4,181 | 89·5672665 |
| Neasden ILO | 2,106 | 91·20831529 |
| Neath | 1,151 | 75·67389875 |
| New Forest | 1,114 | 93·53484467 |
| New Malden | 408 | 91·68539326 |
| Newbury | 1,306 | 94·84386347 |
| Newcastle (Staffs) | 1,750 | 88·07247106 |
| Newcastle East | 2,821 | 82·84875184 |
| Newcastle St. James | 3,420 | 84·59065051 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne West | 3,445 | 73·18886764 |
| Newport Gwent | 4,377 | 91·16850656 |
| Newtown | 975 | 93·21223709 |
| North Shields ILO | 2,493 | 84·16610398 |
| Northallerton | 397 | 87·83185841 |
| Northampton | 2,051 | 87·12829227 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Northwich | 2,573 | 96·875 |
| Norwich Chantry | 2,459 | 93·74761723 |
| Norwich Mountergate | 2,603 | 93·53215954 |
| Nottingham Castle Gate | 2,439 | 80·38892551 |
| Nottingham David Lane | 3,005 | 91·56002438 |
| Nottingham Shakespeare St | 3,431 | 87·28059018 |
| Nottingham Station St ILO | 2,387 | 89·53488372 |
| Nuneaton | 2,015 | 88·53251318 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Oban ILO | 328 | 86·54353562 |
| Oldham | 3,310 | 89·55627706 |
| Orpington | 766 | 86·65158371 |
| Oxford | 3,433 | 93·51675293 |
| Paisley ILO | 6,109 | 85·01252435 |
| Pembroke Dock | 1,079 | 88·51517637 |
| Penrith | 333 | 95·68965517 |
| Penzance | 1,079 | 91·82978723 |
| Perth | 2,198 | 88·23765556 |
| Peterborough | 5,826 | 93·75603476 |
| Peterhead ILO | 1,337 | 92·01651755 |
| Peterlee | 1,995 | 77·71717959 |
| Plymouth | 4,938 | 93·80699088 |
| Plymouth Crownhill | 3,362 | 82·2407045 |
| Pontefract ILO | 1,608 | 84·27672956 |
| Pontypridd | 1,692 | 91·31138694 |
| Poole | 1,727 | 94·3715847 |
| Port Glasgow | 2,437 | 89·56266079 |
| Port Talbot | 1,111 | 81·27286028 |
| Porth | 836 | 86·7219917 |
| Porthmadog | 467 | 89·46360153 |
| Portsmouth North | 1,159 | 79·71114168 |
| Portsmouth South | 3,033 | 91·85342217 |
| Preston North | 2,713 | 83·27194598 |
| Preston South | 1,908 | 94·08284024 |
| Reading | 2,520 | 96·21993127 |
| Redcar ILO | 1,864 | 79·65811966 |
| Redditch | 871 | 88·51626016 |
| Redhill | 1,334 | 94·81165601 |
| Rhyl | 2,206 | 80·89475614 |
| Rochdale | 3,275 | 87·0790481 |
| Romford | 1,655 | 93·02979202 |
| Rossendale | 967 | 93·33976834 |
| Rotherham North | 1,308 | 82·00626959 |
| Rotherham South | 4,068 | 85·6962292 |
| Rugby | 771 | 93·79562044 |

*1990-91 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| South East Thameside DO Bexley | 2,586 | 92·98813376 |
| Salford North | 3,589 | 88·96876549 |
| Salford South | 2,046 | 83·5443038 |
| Salisbury | 1,727 | 92·35294118 |
| Scarborough ILO | 1,816 | 85·21820741 |
| Scunthorpe ILO | 2,672 | 90·27027027 |
| Seaham | 1,152 | 75·59055118 |
| Sheffield North East ILO | 7,528 | 89·80078731 |
| Sheffield North East | 5,164 | 86·45571739 |
| Sheffield South West | 4,812 | 83·02277433 |
| Sheffield South West ILO | 4,774 | 99·91628296 |
| Shrewsbury | 1,911 | 97·94976935 |
| Sittingbourne | 1,539 | 86·46067416 |
| Skegness | 558 | 93·31103679 |
| Skelmersdale | 3,362 | 88·63696283 |
| Skipton | 514 | 92·11469534 |
| Slough | 1,367 | 90·05270092 |
| Smethwick | 2,650 | 91·31633356 |
| South Shields | 4,274 | 81·50266972 |
| Southampton | 4,489 | 87·0467326 |
| Southend on Sea | 1,614 | 84·99210111 |
| Southport ILO | 784 | 95·96083231 |
| St. Albans | 1,366 | 94·92703266 |
| St. Helens | 3,890 | 82·2410148 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| St. Austell | 2,508 | 91·83449286 |
| Stafford | 799 | 94·55621302 |
| Stanley ILO | 2,719 | 87·93661061 |
| Stevenage | 1,135 | 90·15091342 |
| Stirling | 2,922 | 87·24992535 |
| Stockport North | 2,951 | 95·37815126 |
| Stockport South | 2,723 | 93·09401709 |
| Stockton | 5,158 | 83·7201753 |
| Stoke on Trent North ILO | 2,955 | 89·11338963 |
| Stoke on Trent South | 2,558 | 86·41891892 |
| Stornoway | 672 | 96·69064748 |
| Stranraer | 1,061 | 78·01470588 |
| Stroud | 1,098 | 87·14285714 |
| Sunderland North | 5,980 | 81·43810432 |
| Sunderland South | 4,367 | 82·39622642 |
| Sutton | 578 | 85·75667656 |
| Sutton in Ashfield ILO | 1,467 | 86·70212766 |
| Swansea | 3,350 | 86·16255144 |
| Swindon | 3,072 | 86·58399098 |

| Office name | Awards | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| Taunton | 2,029 | 93·24448529 |
| Telford | 3,267 | 87·77538958 |
| Thanet | 3,382 | 91·01184069 |
| Tonypandy | 1,673 | 85·53169734 |
| Torbay | 2,705 | 87·73921505 |
| Trowbridge | 962 | 93·30746848 |
| Truro | 1,960 | 96·36184857 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 998 | 96·42512077 |
| Twickenham | 375 | 100 |
| Uxbridge ILO | 2,142 | 88·99044454 |
| Wakefield | 2,462 | 93·18697956 |
| Wallasey | 2,105 | 94·8625507 |
| Wallsend ILO | 1,999 | 86·0525183 |
| Walsall East | 2,304 | 85·68240982 |
| Walsall West | 2,769 | 89·23622301 |
| Warrington | 3,341 | 89·81182796 |
| Watford | 1,138 | 90·53301512 |
| Wath on Dearne | 2,336 | 87·58905137 |
| Wellingborough ILO | 2,626 | 91·56206416 |
| West Bromwich ILO | 3,160 | 85·72978839 |
| Weston-Super-Mare | 958 | 94·10609037 |
| Weymouth | 1,721 | 91·01004759 |
| Whitehaven | 775 | 79·8146241 |
| Wick | 854 | 84·72222222 |
| Widnes | 4,765 | 87·72091311 |
| Wigan | 3,541 | 90·10178117 |
| Wilmslow | 700 | 93·08510638 |
| Winchester | 1,082 | 94·74605954 |
| Woking | 1,418 | 94·91298527 |
| Wolverhampton North ILO | 3,843 | 90·33850494 |
| Wolverhampton South | 3,617 | 99·20460779 |
| Worcester | 2,058 | 94·79502533 |
| Workington | 676 | 56·28642798 |
| Worksop | 1,581 | 82·08722741 |
| Worthing | 1,355 | 92·61790841 |
| Wrexham | 2,878 | 80·5034965 |
| Yeovil | 986 | 90·37580202 |
| York | 3,295 | 93·42217182 |

*1991-92 Percentage awards of eligible applicants*

| District | Awards | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Bankside | 6,790 | 87·692109 |
| Barking and Havering DO | 3,971 | 84·11353527 |
| Barnet | 4,384 | 86·64031621 |
| Barnsley DMU | 6,468 | 90·89376054 |
| Bedfordshire | 6,616 | 86·12340536 |
| Berkshire DO | 8,919 | 93·38289184 |
| Birmingham Chamberlain | 7,735 | 90·34104181 |
| Birmingham Heartlands | 6,670 | 84·4624541 |
| Birmingham North West | 8,050 | 89·5140665 |
| Birmingham South East | 4,353 | 84·40954043 |
| Birmingham South West | 7,371 | 87·98042492 |
| Blackburn and Accrington | 4,850 | 87·43464936 |
| Blackpool DO | 6,127 | 93·84285495 |

| District | Awards | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Bolton DO | 7,638 | 90·66951567 |
| Bradford DM | 14,086 | 88·88748659 |
| Bristol Severnside | 10,221 | 91·14499732 |
| Brunel DO | 8,156 | 94·36538239 |
| Burnley/Pendle/Rossendale | 4,929 | 86·58001054 |
| Cambridgeshire | 8,375 | 92·02285463 |
| Canterbury and Thanet | 6,545 | 94·29477021 |
| Central Derbyshire | 8,346 | 90·62873276 |
| Channel | 6,780 | 93·40129494 |
| Cheshire East | 3,809 | 92·60880136 |
| Cheshire North W and Cen A | 9,868 | 87·42801453 |
| City East | 4,207 | 85·1964358 |
| Clyde Coast and Cowal | 7,836 | 82·05235602 |
| Coatbridge | 11,287 | 83·90573892 |
| Cornwall | 8,028 | 94·53603391 |
| Coventry DO | 11,479 | 89·77086103 |
| Cumbria North | 5,113 | 90·80092346 |
| Cynon Merthyr Rhymnney Val | 8,689 | 75·32726485 |
| Derbyshire North | 5,223 | 95·13661202 |
| Derbyshire South District | 5,609 | 91·99606364 |
| Doncaster DMU | 7,963 | 83·5396559 |
| Dorset | 9,664 | 92·63803681 |
| Durham North | 9,184 | 79·40515303 |
| Durham South | 7,739 | 79·890575 |
| East Lowlands | 9,783 | 82·54999578 |
| East Sussex | 3,909 | 91·58856607 |
| Essex South East | 2,791 | 87·35524257 |
| Essex South West | 8,083 | 92·55696782 |
| Euston DO | 11,924 | 91·75130809 |
| Exeter and North Devon District | 5,649 | 88·05923617 |
| Fife | 9,092 | 78·66412874 |
| Forth Valley District | 7,379 | 82·26309922 |
| Fulham DO | 14,543 | 87·92623942 |
| Glamorgan South | 14,678 | 84·38542026 |
| Glasgow (South-West) District | 13,544 | 87·90809372 |
| Glasgow Anniesland | 8,421 | 85·18106413 |
| Glasgow City District | 12,062 | 88·4246023 |
| Glasgow Laurieston | 16,392 | 87·26111259 |
| Gloucester | 5,939 | 85·07377176 |
| Grampian and Shetland | 7,934 | 90·37475795 |
| Gwent North and Brecon DO | 5,671 | 84·6670648 |
| Gwyneddigion | 6,007 | 90·82249773 |
| Hackney and Islington | 10,230 | 89·73684211 |
| Halifax | 8,464 | 89·87046082 |
| Hampshire North | 4,685 | 90·63648675 |
| Harrow and Hillingdon DO | 3,339 | 89·61352657 |
| Hereford and Worcester DO | 4,240 | 90·88960343 |
| Highlands and Islands | 8,373 | 92·18319938 |
| Hordan House, Wirral DO | 15,427 | 86·19880427 |
| Hounslow and Kingston DO | 5,962 | 90·87029416 |
| Hull East | 13,581 | 85·69535588 |
| Irvine DO | 7,331 | 81·45555556 |
| Kent-North Based | 9,004 | 87·29035385 |
| Kirklees MDU | 9,571 | 89·96146254 |
| Knowsley DO | 11,712 | 87·03277105 |
| Lancaster | 5,933 | 91·81367998 |
| Lea-Roding DO | 6,678 | 88·52067869 |
| Leaside DO | 8,629 | 91·49612978 |
| Leeds North | 9,655 | 89·75550804 |
| Leeds South | 9,354 | 83·94507763 |
| Leicester South DO | 8,073 | 91·95808179 |
| Leicestershire North DO | 5,948 | 91·14311983 |
| Lewisham and Brixton DO | 11,064 | 89·11800242 |
| Lincolnshire East | 4,067 | 89·05189402 |
| Liverpool Central | 11,065 | 88·83269107 |
| Liverpool North District O | 11,242 | 88·08964112 |
| Liverpool South | 12,921 | 85·9223301 |
| Lomond and Argyll | 6,965 | 82·24111465 |
| London Central District OFF | 3,105 | 90·41933605 |
| London Ealing | 6,935 | 85·58558559 |
| London Newham District OFF | 7,625 | 88·98354534 |
| Lothian Central | 9,819 | 90·84096586 |
| Lothian West Do | 9,216 | 81·76011356 |
| Manchester Central District | 9,251 | 89·08898305 |
| Manchester North | 5,421 | 85·91125198 |
| Mid Wales and Maelor | 4,780 | 86·87749909 |
| Motherwell District | 11,613 | 86·22661123 |
| Neasden District OFF | 7,551 | 91·64947202 |
| Newcastle Upon Tyne District | 11,981 | 80·37702938 |
| North and East Herts DO | 3,217 | 92·68222414 |
| North Essex District | 5,417 | 91·0267182 |
| North Staffs District OFF | 9,603 | 90·37267081 |
| North Tees | 8,497 | 73·52890273 |
| North Tyneside District | 4,949 | 82·53835891 |
| North Wales Coast | 5,792 | 88·17171563 |
| North Yorkshire | 5,781 | 93·72568093 |
| Northamptonshire | 6,763 | 85·03709292 |
| Northumberland | 6,494 | 89·19104519 |
| Norwich | 8,527 | 87·14358712 |
| Nottinghamshire East | 6,681 | 87·13968958 |
| Nottinghamshire North | 7,361 | 88·2296536 |
| Nottinghamshire West DO | 8,654 | 85·14364423 |
| Ogwr Afan Nedd | 5,615 | 80·58266361 |
| Oldham DO | 9,763 | 89·85734008 |
| Oxfordshire | 6,762 | 92·26361032 |
| Paisley DO | 9,148 | 86·17181613 |
| Preston DO | 5,686 | 92·92368034 |
| Rotherham South ILO | 8,281 | 83·51991931 |
| S.E. Hants and Wight DO | 11,273 | 89·46825397 |
| Salford | 6,703 | 90·92512208 |
| Sandwell DO | 7359 | 88·6626506 |
| Sefton DO | 10,656 | 87·30132722 |
| Sheffield East | 14,501 | 88·96319018 |
| Sheffield West | 11,387 | 90·47354203 |
| Shettleston | 19,224 | 82·48165787 |
| Shropshire DO | 6,130 | 90·34635225 |
| Solent and Forest | 9,625 | 89·85250187 |
| Somerset | 6,000 | 94·10288582 |
| South Cheshire | 11,557 | 89·74916518 |
| South Devon | 15,237 | 88·2434702 |
| South Downs | 9,868 | 93·1822474 |
| South Gwent and Islwyn | 7,185 | 86·4412897 |
| South Humberside | 9,047 | 84·18946585 |
| South Manchester | 15,627 | 92·14033019 |
| South Tees | 12,462 | 79·46690473 |
| South West Lancs | 8,108 | 86·11789697 |
| South West Thames | 9,580 | 89·51597832 |
| Springburn DO | 12,879 | 83·07960263 |
| Staffordshire Central DO | 4,797 | 90·74914869 |
| Stockport | 6,560 | 95·40430483 |
| Suffolk DO | 7,623 | 92·08746074 |
| Surrey Downs DO | 5,045 | 92·79014162 |
| Surrey North | 6,586 | 84·31698886 |
| SW Scotland District | 8,013 | 80·25841346 |
| Swansea | 5,606 | 80·76646016 |
| Taff Rhondda DO | 4,928 | 83·56791589 |
| Tameside DO | 6,748 | 87·62498377 |
| Tayside DO | 10,950 | 80·42600073 |
| Thameside | 7,943 | 86·86570429 |
| Tyneside South | 15,177 | 84·03189192 |
| Wakefield DO | 8,420 | 85·83953512 |
| Wales West | 7,290 | 85·33302119 |
| Walsall District | 7,150 | 86·7929109 |
| Warwickshire District | 5,191 | 92·00638072 |
| Wearside | 13,719 | 80·91418461 |
| West Herts DO | 4,381 | 93·59111301 |
| West Kent District | 4,974 | 89·75099242 |
| West Lincolnshire | 7,613 | 92·01111917 |
| West Pennine | 8,784 | 88·74520105 |
| West Sussex | 7,122 | 91·89677419 |
| Wigan and Leigh District | 5,985 | 86·45096057 |
| Wiltshire | 9,122 | 90·98344305 |
| Wolverhampton | 8,999 | 93·84711649 |
| Worcestershire North | 6,766 | 89·32013201 |
| Yorkshire East | 5,136 | 90·16853933 |

## SCOTLAND

### Housing Expenditure

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total public expenditure on housing expressed in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* at 1990-91 prices and *(c)* as a percentage of total Scottish Office expenditure for each year since 1979 inclusive; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* The information is in the tables. Table 1 provides details of the total gross public expenditure on housing which lies within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend; tables 2 and 3 provide details of capital expenditure on housing by local authorities in each year since 1979, expressed in cash terms and at 1990-91 prices, using GDP deflators.

*Table 1*

| | *Column 1 (£ million)* | *Column 2 (£ million)* | *Column 3 (per cent.)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 773 | 1,677 | 17 |
| 1980-81 | 855 | 1,568 | 16 |
| 1981-82 | 923 | 1,544 | 16 |
| 1982-83 | 870 | 1,358 | 13 |
| 1983-84 | 962 | 1,435 | 14 |
| 1984-85 | 705 | 1,002 | 10 |
| 1985-86 | 694 | 935 | 10 |
| 1986-87 | 710 | 926 | 9 |
| 1987-88 | 887 | 1,097 | 11 |
| 1988-89 | 913 | 1,053 | 11 |
| 1989-90 | 1,122 | 1,214 | 13 |
| 1990-91 | 1,083 | 1,083 | 11 |
| 1991-92 | 1,246 | 1,081 | 11 |

*Notes:*

1. Column 1 lists in cash terms the total gross public expenditure on housing in Scotland which lies within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland. This includes gross capital expenditure by local authorities, new towns, Scottish Homes and it's predecessors, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in Scotland, as well as current expenditure on grants and subsidies by central government. The figure for 1991-92 is provisional.
2. Column 2 expresses the figures shown in column 1 in 1990-91 prices, using GDP deflators.
3. Since gross total figures for Scottish Office expenditure are not available, Column 3 expresses the figures shown in Column 1 as a percentage of the total net public expenditure within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Scotland for the relevant year, expressed in cash terms.
4. The figures for years 1979-80 to 1983-84 are not directly comparable with those for 1984-85 to 1991-92 due to the changes in the definition of the Planning Total announced in Cm 441.

*Table 2*
*Housing capital expenditure by local authority (cash terms)*

*£ million*

| *Authority* | *1979-80* | *1980-81* | *1981-82* | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Borders* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Berwickshire | 0·832 | 0·957 | 1·068 | 1·225 | 1·731 | 1·182 | 1·384 | 1·169 | 1·337 | 1·579 | 1·337 | 1·419 | 1·384 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 0·851 | 0·737 | 1·222 | 1·395 | 2·147 | 1·421 | 1·327 | 1·668 | 2·179 | 2·733 | 2·692 | 2·536 | 2·447 |
| Roxburgh | 2·497 | 2·603 | 2·605 | 4·473 | 4·807 | 3·674 | 2·860 | 3·373 | 4·454 | 4·594 | 4·989 | 4·765 | 4·010 |
| Tweeddale | 0·596 | 0·712 | 0·475 | 0·261 | 0·661 | 0·516 | 0·426 | 0·934 | 1·459 | 0·767 | 0·714 | 0·873 | 0·952 |
| *Central* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clackmannan | 2·688 | 2·410 | 2·165 | 2·744 | 3·444 | 2·056 | 2·207 | 2·881 | 5·738 | 6·633 | 5·766 | 4·983 | 4·811 |
| Falkirk | 5·085 | 5·034 | 5·819 | 9·426 | 11·790 | 10·110 | 10·842 | 12·746 | 16·990 | 20·448 | 15·105 | 16·745 | 19·011 |
| Stirling | 4·367 | 5·157 | 4·960 | 5·312 | 5·285 | 5·121 | 5·969 | 7·085 | 8·754 | 9·159 | 9·714 | 8·813 | 9·302 |
| *Dumfries and Galloway* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 3·158 | 3·707 | 3·922 | 4·516 | 4·700 | 3·623 | 2·811 | 3·271 | 4·239 | 3·832 | 4·807 | 4·711 | 3·913 |
| Nithsdale | 2·118 | 2·056 | 2·168 | 3·249 | 3·970 | 3·001 | 3·631 | 5·200 | 6·460 | 7·355 | 7·164 | 6·714 | 6·214 |
| Stewartry | 1·311 | 1·278 | 1·560 | 1·576 | 1·954 | 1·565 | 1·682 | 1·698 | 1·976 | 2·202 | 2·229 | 1·887 | 2·144 |
| Wigtown | 1·547 | 1·542 | 1·889 | 2·072 | 3·930 | 2·253 | 2·614 | 3·209 | 3·933 | 3·954 | 3·698 | 3·961 | 3·941 |
| *Fife* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dunfermline | 4·951 | 4·257 | 5·453 | 7·037 | 7·949 | 7·978 | 8·928 | 9·622 | 14·627 | 13·019 | 11·244 | 10·836 | 11·143 |
| Kirkcaldy | 5·712 | 5·875 | 8·731 | 11·237 | 10·431 | 8·010 | 8·816 | 9·339 | 13·421 | 14·165 | 13·742 | 13·227 | 11·668 |
| North East Fife | 3·279 | 2·960 | 2·678 | 4·010 | 5·592 | 4·629 | 4·641 | 6·553 | 5·914 | 5·262 | 5·266 | 5·833 | 4·971 |
| *Grampian* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aberdeen | 15·678 | 14·618 | 13·418 | 10·162 | 19·144 | 19·334 | 15·177 | 19·269 | 23·680 | 0·000 | 19·457 | 19·096 | 21·192 |
| Banff and Buchan | 4·867 | 5·258 | 4·412 | 5·148 | 5·824 | 5·712 | 5·327 | 5·418 | 5·602 | 5·416 | 5·139 | 5·112 | 6·110 |
| Gordon | 1·688 | 2·338 | 3·777 | 6·023 | 7·897 | 4·856 | 6·892 | 7·339 | 8·500 | 8·619 | 8·890 | 8·266 | 8·307 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 0·838 | 1·212 | 1·884 | 2·913 | 4·063 | 3·732 | 4·330 | 4·235 | 5·212 | 4·504 | 4·803 | 6·566 | 5·090 |
| Moray | 6·465 | 5·933 | 5·247 | 6·479 | 6·545 | 5·624 | 4·777 | 4·950 | 7·538 | 6·924 | 6·446 | 6·116 | 7·007 |
| *Highland* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 0·810 | 1·014 | 1·479 | 0·939 | 1·201 | 0·933 | 0·720 | 0·655 | 0·902 | 0·754 | 1·779 | 1·664 | 1·549 |
| Caithness | 1·863 | 2·185 | 1·855 | 3·284 | 6·995 | 4·160 | 3·481 | 4·090 | 4·764 | 4·969 | 4·094 | 3·977 | 3·320 |
| Inverness | 3·130 | 3·473 | 3·231 | 3·940 | 6·364 | 4·228 | 5·051 | 5·564 | 5·570 | 6·144 | 7·794 | 7·988 | 6·390 |
| Lochaber | 1·921 | 2·153 | 2·099 | 1·638 | 2·238 | 2·526 | 3·091 | 3·788 | 4·271 | 4·421 | 5·929 | 4·562 | 3·701 |
| Nairn | 0·389 | 0·520 | 0·987 | 0·617 | 0·669 | 0·884 | 0·924 | 0·835 | 1·194 | 1·227 | 1·226 | 1·275 | 1·279 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 3·594 | 3·401 | 3·793 | 5·244 | 8·500 | 5·672 | 5·959 | 7·299 | 8·317 | 9·275 | 8·773 | 8·642 | 8·390 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 0·790 | 0·674 | 0·844 | 1·116 | 1·841 | 1·508 | 2·289 | 2·591 | 2·743 | 2·949 | 2·773 | 2·654 | 2·762 |
| Sutherland | 0·882 | 0·690 | 0·916 | 1·664 | 1·763 | 2·209 | 2·133 | 2·717 | 2·497 | 2·741 | 3·030 | 2·626 | 2·646 |
| *Lothian* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| East Lothian | 2·975 | 3·696 | 5·059 | 7·540 | 10·409 | 6·706 | 6·860 | 8·765 | 12·847 | 14·907 | 11·107 | 9·759 | 9·805 |
| Edinburgh | 14·328 | 19·401 | 25·963 | 27·034 | 46·977 | 30·361 | 42·521 | 41·148 | 67·142 | 71·995 | 70·282 | 68·770 | 54·263 |
| Midlothian | 1·986 | 2·266 | 2·720 | 4·019 | 5·793 | 5·260 | 4·570 | 5·098 | 6·331 | 6·041 | 5·652 | 7·766 | 6·018 |
| West Lothian | 2·879 | 3·060 | 4·258 | 5·705 | 6·434 | 6·101 | 6·958 | 8·372 | 8·931 | 9·275 | 12·066 | 8·340 | 8·937 |
| *Strathclyde* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Argyll and Bute | 3·784 | 5·330 | 6·575 | 8·270 | 9·169 | 9·065 | 6·403 | 8·215 | 9·539 | 10·092 | 9·893 | 8·566 | 10·398 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 1·205 | 0·751 | 0·824 | 0·771 | 1·061 | 0·869 | 0·908 | 1·540 | 1·898 | 2·405 | 1·848 | 1·977 | 1·696 |

| Authority | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | 1991-92[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clydebank | 1·963 | 2·884 | 2·441 | 3·293 | 4·013 | 3·452 | 4·458 | 5·389 | 6·975 | 7·734 | 7·744 | 7·939 | 7·397 |
| Clydesdale | 1·361 | 1·338 | 1·556 | 2·060 | 3·139 | 2·249 | 2·241 | 2·679 | 3·365 | 4·723 | 4·863 | 4·887 | 4·910 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 1·848 | 0·965 | 1·104 | 1·406 | 1·571 | 1·107 | 1·383 | 1·720 | 2·544 | 2·714 | 2·161 | 2·346 | 2·103 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 1·731 | 1·866 | 1·599 | 1·836 | 1·904 | 1·492 | 1·631 | 2·255 | 3·743 | 3·656 | 3·721 | 3·720 | 3·141 |
| Cunninghame | 5·527 | 6·204 | 6·371 | 4·415 | 8·049 | 5·728 | 6·194 | 7·393 | 11·262 | 13·103 | 14·606 | 14·319 | 13·742 |
| Dumbarton | 2·093 | 2·428 | 2·736 | 2·064 | 3·668 | 2·267 | 2·690 | 4·057 | 6·932 | 6·901 | 8·992 | 9·050 | 8·419 |
| East Kilbride | 0·767 | 0·846 | 0·995 | 1·014 | 1·390 | 0·861 | 0·755 | 0·753 | 0·731 | 0·816 | 0·953 | 1·005 | 1·289 |
| Eastwood | 0·391 | 0·330 | 0·472 | 0·384 | 1·132 | 1·285 | 1·165 | 1·174 | 1·438 | 1·564 | 1·455 | 1·849 | 1·380 |
| Glasgow | 77·250 | 79·770 | 79·614 | 88·167 | 143·049 | 135·365 | 106·981 | 113·465 | 154·780 | 137·208 | 153·598 | 138·079 | 124·443 |
| Hamilton | 6·597 | 6·240 | 5·274 | 5·397 | 5·387 | 4·851 | 6·132 | 6·290 | 11·899 | 11·202 | 13·152 | 13·300 | 11·406 |
| Inverclyde | 5·911 | 5·809 | 5·027 | 6·888 | 11·618 | 5·570 | 6·813 | 7·776 | 8·075 | 9·658 | 11·236 | 10·352 | 11·154 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 3·083 | 2·149 | 2·079 | 2·273 | 4·269 | 3·203 | 4·040 | 4·727 | 6·077 | 7·806 | 8·480 | 8·444 | 7·910 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 4·408 | 3·733 | 4·412 | 4·692 | 6·227 | 4·589 | 5·640 | 6·252 | 9·419 | 8·819 | 8·201 | 7·859 | 8·001 |
| Monklands | 8·862 | 8·524 | 8·394 | 10·425 | 7·516 | 5·077 | 6·235 | 8·363 | 13·030 | 13·075 | 15·913 | 16·414 | 14·239 |
| Motherwell | 10·466 | 9·547 | 9·084 | 8·329 | 8·118 | 6·801 | 8·534 | 10·955 | 12·362 | 18·284 | 19·497 | 19·296 | 19·981 |
| Renfrew | 8·144 | 9·646 | 9·524 | 10·968 | 15·335 | 14·201 | 14·477 | 15·563 | 21·461 | 26·238 | 24·010 | 25·429 | 22·407 |
| Strathkelvin | 4·221 | 4·460 | 4·213 | 3·506 | 5·759 | 3·573 | 4·228 | 5·775 | 6·185 | 6·670 | 6·538 | 6·545 | 5·914 |
| *Tayside* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Angus | 2·231 | 3·512 | 3·422 | 3·812 | 5·079 | 4·159 | 4·512 | 4·875 | 5·565 | 5·178 | 5·750 | 6·210 | 6·120 |
| Dundee | 7·210 | 9·163 | 9·020 | 11·928 | 16·298 | 13·498 | 14·405 | 15·441 | 22·458 | 21·004 | 26·106 | 28·239 | 24·329 |
| Perth and Kinross | 5·346 | 4·997 | 3·808 | 4·518 | 8·730 | 8·903 | 6·191 | 6·716 | 6·937 | 9·790 | 10·237 | 6·807 | 8·114 |
| *Islands Areas* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Orkney | 1·721 | 1·761 | 1·605 | 2·005 | 3·011 | 2·731 | 2·060 | 1·433 | 1·808 | 2·201 | 2·401 | 2·124 | 1·316 |
| Shetland | 3·530 | 3·540 | 2·753 | 3·296 | 3·732 | 4·390 | 3·793 | 5·058 | 4·364 | 6·621 | 5·557 | 5·726 | 5·415 |
| Western Isles | 3·097 | 3·609 | 4·982 | 5·835 | 6·719 | 8·103 | 6·721 | 5·893 | 7·867 | 8·859 | 8·748 | 9·096 | 8·101 |

*Table 3*

*Housing capital expenditure by local authority (real terms at 1990-91 prices)*

£ million

| Authority | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91[1] | 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Borders* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Berwickshire | 1·805 | 1·755 | 1·786 | 1·912 | 2·583 | 1·679 | 1·864 | 1·524 | 1·653 | 1·821 | 1·447 | 1·419 | 1·200 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 1·847 | 1·351 | 2·044 | 2·178 | 3·203 | 2·019 | 1·787 | 2·175 | 2·694 | 3·151 | 2·912 | 2·536 | 2·122 |
| Roxburgh | 5·418 | 4·773 | 4·356 | 6·983 | 7·172 | 5·220 | 3·851 | 4·397 | 5·507 | 5·297 | 5·398 | 4·765 | 3·478 |
| Tweeddale | 1·293 | 1·306 | 0·794 | 0·407 | 0·986 | 0·733 | 0·574 | 1·218 | 1·804 | 0·884 | 0·772 | 0·873 | 0·826 |
| *Central* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clackmannan | 5·833 | 4·419 | 3·620 | 4·284 | 5·138 | 2·921 | 2·972 | 3·756 | 7·095 | 7·649 | 6·238 | 4·983 | 4·173 |
| Falkirk | 11·034 | 9·231 | 9·731 | 14·715 | 17·590 | 14·365 | 14·599 | 16·616 | 21·007 | 23·579 | 16·342 | 16·745 | 16·489 |
| Stirling | 9·476 | 9·456 | 8·294 | 8·292 | 7·885 | 7·276 | 8·037 | 9·236 | 10·824 | 10·561 | 10·510 | 8·813 | 8·068 |
| *Dumfries and Galloway* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 6·353 | 6·798 | 6·559 | 7·050 | 7·012 | 5·148 | 3·785 | 4·264 | 5·241 | 4·419 | 5·201 | 4·711 | 3·394 |
| Nithsdale | 4·596 | 3·770 | 3·625 | 5·072 | 5·923 | 4·264 | 4·889 | 6·779 | 7·987 | 8·481 | 7·751 | 6·714 | 5·390 |
| Stewartry | 2·845 | 2·343 | 2·609 | 2·460 | 2·915 | 2·224 | 2·265 | 2·214 | 2·443 | 2·539 | 2·412 | 1·887 | 1·860 |
| Wigtown | 3·357 | 2·828 | 3·159 | 3·235 | 5·863 | 3·201 | 3·520 | 4·183 | 4·863 | 4·559 | 4·001 | 3·961 | 3·418 |
| *Fife* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dunfermline | 10·743 | 7·806 | 9·119 | 10·985 | 11·859 | 11·335 | 12·022 | 12·544 | 18·085 | 15·013 | 12·165 | 10·836 | 9·665 |
| Kirkcaldy | 12·394 | 10·773 | 14·601 | 17·542 | 15·562 | 11·381 | 11·871 | 12·175 | 16·594 | 16·334 | 14·867 | 13·227 | 10·120 |
| North East Fife | 7·115 | 5·428 | 4·478 | 6·260 | 8·343 | 6·577 | 6·249 | 8·543 | 7·312 | 6·068 | 5·697 | 5·833 | 4·312 |
| *Grampian* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Aberdeen | 34·020 | 26·805 | 22·439 | 15·864 | 28·561 | 27·470 | 20·436 | 25·120 | 29·279 | 0·000 | 21·051 | 19·096 | 18·381 |
| Banff and Buchan | 10·561 | 9·642 | 7·378 | 8·036 | 8·689 | 8·116 | 7·173 | 7·063 | 6·927 | 6·245 | 5·560 | 5·112 | 5·300 |
| Gordon | 3·663 | 4·287 | 6·316 | 9·402 | 11·782 | 6·900 | 9·280 | 9·568 | 10·510 | 9·939 | 9·618 | 8·266 | 7·205 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 1·818 | 2·222 | 3·151 | 4·547 | 6·062 | 5·303 | 5·830 | 5·521 | 6·444 | 5·194 | 5·196 | 6·566 | 4·415 |
| Moray | 14·028 | 10·879 | 8·774 | 10·114 | 9·765 | 7·991 | 6·432 | 6·453 | 9·320 | 7·984 | 6·974 | 6·116 | 6·078 |
| *Highland* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 1·758 | 1·859 | 2·473 | 1·466 | 1·792 | 1·326 | 0·970 | 0·854 | 1·115 | 0·869 | 1·925 | 1·664 | 1·344 |
| Caithness | 4·043 | 4·007 | 3·102 | 5·127 | 10·436 | 5·911 | 4·687 | 5·332 | 5·890 | 5·730 | 4·429 | 3·977 | 2·880 |
| Inverness | 6·792 | 6·369 | 5·403 | 6·151 | 9·495 | 6·007 | 6·801 | 7·254 | 6·887 | 7·085 | 8·432 | 7·988 | 5·542 |
| Lochaber | 4·168 | 3·948 | 3·510 | 2·557 | 3·339 | 3·589 | 4·162 | 4·938 | 5·281 | 5·098 | 6·415 | 4·562 | 3·210 |
| Hairn | 0·844 | 0·954 | 1·651 | 0·963 | 0·998 | 1·256 | 1·244 | 1·089 | 1·476 | 1·415 | 1·326 | 1·275 | 1·109 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 7·799 | 6·236 | 6·343 | 8·186 | 12·681 | 8·059 | 8·024 | 9·515 | 10·284 | 10·695 | 9·492 | 8·642 | 7·277 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 1·714 | 1·236 | 1·411 | 1·742 | 2·747 | 2·143 | 3·082 | 3·378 | 3·392 | 3·401 | 3·000 | 2·654 | 2·396 |
| Sutherland | 1·914 | 1·265 | 1·532 | 2·598 | 2·630 | 3·139 | 2·872 | 3·542 | 3·087 | 3·161 | 3·278 | 2·626 | 2·295 |
| *Lothian* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| East Lothian | 6·455 | 6·777 | 8·460 | 11·770 | 15·529 | 9·528 | 9·237 | 11·427 | 15·885 | 17·190 | 12·017 | 9·759 | 8·504 |
| Edinburgh | 31·090 | 35·576 | 43·417 | 42·202 | 70·086 | 43·848 | 57·256 | 53·643 | 83·017 | 83·019 | 76·038 | 68·770 | 47·066 |
| Midlothian | 4·309 | 4·155 | 4·549 | 6·274 | 8·643 | 7·474 | 6·154 | 6·646 | 7·828 | 6·966 | 6·115 | 7·766 | 5·220 |
| West Lothian | 6·247 | 5·611 | 7·121 | 8·906 | 9·599 | 8·669 | 9·369 | 10·914 | 11·043 | 10·695 | 13·054 | 8·340 | 7·752 |
| *Strathclyde* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Argyll and Bute | 8·211 | 9·774 | 10·995 | 12·910 | 13·679 | 12·880 | 8·622 | 10·710 | 11·794 | 11·637 | 10·703 | 8·566 | 9·019 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 2·615 | 1·377 | 1·378 | 1·204 | 1·583 | 1·235 | 1·223 | 2·008 | 2·347 | 2·773 | 1·999 | 1·977 | 1·471 |
| Clydebank | 4·260 | 5·288 | 4·082 | 5·141 | 5·987 | 4·905 | 6·003 | 7·025 | 8·624 | 8·918 | 8·378 | 7·939 | 6·416 |
| Clydesdale | 2·933 | 2·454 | 2·602 | 3·216 | 4·683 | 3·195 | 3·018 | 3·493 | 4·161 | 5·446 | 5·261 | 4·887 | 4·259 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 4·010 | 1·770 | 1·846 | 2·195 | 2·344 | 1·573 | 1·862 | 2·242 | 3·146 | 3·130 | 2·338 | 2·346 | 1·824 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 3·756 | 3·422 | 2·674 | 2·866 | 2·841 | 2·120 | 2·196 | 2·940 | 4·628 | 4·216 | 4·026 | 3·720 | 2·724 |
| Cunninghame | 11·993 | 11·376 | 10·654 | 6·892 | 12·008 | 8·139 | 8·340 | 9·638 | 13·925 | 15·109 | 15·802 | 14·819 | 11·919 |
| Dumbarton | 4·542 | 4·452 | 4·575 | 3·222 | 5·472 | 3·221 | 3·622 | 5·289 | 8·571 | 7·958 | 9·728 | 9·050 | 7·302 |
| East Kilbride | 1·664 | 1·551 | 1·664 | 1·583 | 2·074 | 1·223 | 1·017 | 0·982 | 0·904 | 0·941 | 1·031 | 1·005 | 1·118 |

| Authority | 1979-80 | 1980-81 | 1981-82 | 1982-83 | 1983-84 | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91[1] | 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Eastwood | 0·848 | 0·605 | 0·789 | 0·599 | 1·689 | 1·826 | 1·569 | 1·530 | 1·778 | 1·803 | 1·574 | 1·849 | 1·197 |
| Glasgow | 167·625 | 146·276 | 133·136 | 137·634 | 213·417 | 192·332 | 144·053 | 147·920 | 191·377 | 158·218 | 166·178 | 138·079 | 107·937 |
| Hamilton | 14·315 | 11·442 | 8·820 | 8·425 | 8·037 | 6·892 | 8·257 | 8·200 | 14·712 | 12·917 | 14·229 | 13·300 | 9·893 |
| Inverclyde | 12·826 | 10·652 | 8·406 | 10·753 | 17·333 | 7·914 | 9·174 | 10·137 | 9·984 | 11·137 | 12·156 | 10·352 | 9·675 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 6·690 | 3·941 | 3·477 | 3·548 | 6·369 | 4·551 | 5·440 | 6·162 | 7·514 | 9·001 | 9·175 | 8·444 | 6·861 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 9·565 | 6·845 | 7·378 | 7·324 | 9·290 | 6·520 | 7·594 | 8·150 | 11·646 | 10·169 | 8·873 | 7·859 | 6·940 |
| Monklands | 19·230 | 15·631 | 14·037 | 16·274 | 11·213 | 7·214 | 8·396 | 10·903 | 16·111 | 15·077 | 17·216 | 16·414 | 12·350 |
| Motherwell | 22·710 | 17·507 | 15·191 | 13·002 | 12·111 | 9·663 | 11·491 | 14·282 | 15·285 | 21·084 | 21·094 | 19·296 | 17·331 |
| Renfrew | 17·672 | 17·688 | 15·927 | 17·122 | 22·878 | 20·177 | 19·494 | 20·289 | 26·535 | 30·256 | 25·976 | 25·429 | 19·435 |
| Strathkelvin | 9·159 | 8·178 | 7·045 | 5·473 | 8·592 | 5·077 | 5·693 | 7·529 | 7·647 | 7·691 | 7·073 | 6·545 | 5·130 |
| *Tayside* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Angus | 4·841 | 6·440 | 5·723 | 5·951 | 7·577 | 5·909 | 6·076 | 6·355 | 6·881 | 5·971 | 6·221 | 6·210 | 5·308 |
| Dundee | 15·645 | 16·802 | 15·084 | 18·620 | 24·315 | 19·178 | 19·397 | 20·130 | 27·768 | 24·220 | 28·244 | 28·239 | 21·102 |
| Perth and Kinross | 11·600 | 9·163 | 6·368 | 7·053 | 13·024 | 12·650 | 8·336 | 8·755 | 8·577 | 11·289 | 11·075 | 6·807 | 7·038 |
| *Islands Areas* | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Orkney | 3·734 | 3·229 | 2·684 | 3·130 | 4·492 | 3·880 | 2·774 | 1·868 | 2·235 | 2·538 | 2·598 | 2·124 | 1·141 |
| Shetland | 7·660 | 6·491 | 4·604 | 5·145 | 5·568 | 6·237 | 5·107 | 6·594 | 5·396 | 7·635 | 6·012 | 5·726 | 4·697 |
| Western Isles | 6·720 | 6·618 | 8·331 | 9·109 | 10·024 | 11·513 | 9·050 | 7·682 | 9·727 | 10·216 | 9·464 | 9·096 | 7·027 |

[1] Provisional.

## Rents-to-Mortgages

**Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homes have been bought under the rents-to-mortgages scheme in district councils and Scottish Homes; and if he will list them by district councils.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *(holding answer 26 June 1992):* Based on returns to 31 May 1992, a total of 46 local authority and 265 Scottish Homes properties have been sold under the rent-to-mortgage scheme. A breakdown by district council for local authority sales and by Scottish Homes district office for Scottish Homes sales is shown in the table. The boundaries of Scottish Homes district offices do not align exactly with those of district councils.

| *Rent to mortgage sales* | |
|---|---|
| *District/Islands Councils* | |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 1 |
| Tweeddale | 1 |
| Clackmannan | 1 |
| Stirling | 4 |
| Nithsdale | 1 |
| Kirkcaldy | 4 |
| East Lothian | 9 |
| Midlothian | 6 |
| Eastwood | 2 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 3 |
| Monklands | 1 |
| Renfrew | 7 |
| Angus | 4 |
| Dundee | 1 |
| Orkney | 1 |
| Total | 46 |
| *Scottish Homes* | |
| Edinburgh | 7 |
| Lothian and Borders | 64 |
| Central | 25 |
| Fife | 28 |
| Grampian | 34 |
| Tayside | 11 |
| Highlands and Islands | 9 |
| Lanarkshire | 15 |
| Renfrew and Inverclyde | 26 |
| Ayrshire | 24 |
| Glasgow North and East | 10 |
| Glasgow South | 2 |
| Glasgow West | 10 |
| Total | 265 |

## Placenta (Cosmetic Research)

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria govern the sale by Scottish health authorities of unifected placenta for the purpose of cosmetic research; whether the knowledge or consent of the women involved is required; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** Unless a patient has indicated otherwise, placentae will be treated by hospitals as clinical waste and it is for health boards to decide on the appropriate arrangements for disposal. In some cases placentae are collected by pharmaceutical companies who use these to produce immunoglobulin but I am not aware of placentae being used other than for medical purposes. I shall ask health boards to ensure that the disposal arrangements meet with the agreement of the patient.

## Training

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions her Department is having about the quality and quantity of youth training places in Scotland.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The Scottish Office is in regular routine contact with Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise about the overall performance of the whole range of their programmes, including youth training.

## NHS Expenditure

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the expenditure per head in Scotland of *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* general practitioner services, excluding the cost of prescriptions, *(c)* dental services, gross and net of charges and *(d)* general practitioner-prescribed prescriptions, in 1991-92.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** Final information in respect of expenditure in 1991-92 will not be available until later in the year.

## Assisted Areas

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make his statement concerning the revision of the assisted areas map of Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** A review of the map was announced on 9 June by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Trade and Industry, *Official Report*, column 127. Copies of a consultation paper on the arrangements for the review and the criteria which will be taken into account in considering changes to the map have been placed in the Library. Copies of this paper have also been distributed to a range of interested bodies in Scotland. The closing date for responses to the consultation paper is 30 September 1992.

### Strathclyde Buses

**Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the reason for the delay in making a decision on the management/employee buy-out of Strathclyde Buses; when he expects to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Early in May my right hon. Friend received a request from Strathclyde regional council for consent to sell Strathclyde Buses Ltd to the company's management and employees. On 18 May there was a fire at Strathclyde Buses' Larkfield depot, Glasgow which destroyed the depot and a large number of buses. My right hon. Friend immediately sought clarification from the regional council about whether the vendors and prospective purchasers were content that the terms of the offer should remain unchanged. A response is awaited. A decision on the sale will be announced after the terms of the offer have been confirmed.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Lang:** At 1 April 1992 there were two registered disabled officers at grade 6 level in my Department, which represents 1 per cent. of officers in that grade. The overall number of registered disabled staff was 89, which represents 1·4 per cent. of the total staff in post.

### Civil Servants

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil servants are employed by the Scottish Office in *(a)* London and *(b)* Scotland.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* At 1 April 1992 the number of civil servants employed by the Scottish Office excluding the Scottish prison service was 6,389, of whom 36 were located in London.

### Ozone Depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone depleting chemicals.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The Scottish Office encourages industry and local authorities to recover and recycle CFCs. Some 29 authorities, representing 61 per cent. of the population of Scotland, have schemes for CFC recovery. New schemes identified by authorities in their expenditure plans are taken into account when setting their capital expenditure allocations each year. The public are also encouraged, in the recently published citizens' guide "Green Rights and Responsibilites in Scotland", to make use of council facilities for the safe removal of CFCs from old refrigerators. As a further measure it is intended to ban the supply of refrigerant in disposable containers.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* In January 1992 Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte was engaged to provide assistance in drawing up a list of potential market testing candidates. That consultancy project finished in March 1992 and there are currently no consultants appointed for market testing.

### Forestry

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the advice given by his Department in relation to tree planting in Strath Cuileannach, Sutherland, and its impact on agricultural activity.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* It is not the normal practice of my Department to publish correspondence relating to individual cases in the manner requested. However, the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department was consulted by the Forestry Commission about the proposals to develop a new native pinewood at Strath Cuileannach and decided not to object to the proposals, subject to certain conditions regarding the boundaries of the scheme affecting the land retained for sheep farming. That decision was taken in accordance with the procedures and criteria for the release of agricultural land for forestry announced by the then Secretary of State for Scotland, in reply to a question from myself, on 24 October 1989.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information is available to him from planting applications on the ownership of Strath Cuileannach, Sutherland.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The application for grant aid for planting at Strath Cuileannach shows the land owned by Forest Farm Partnership.

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by geographical area, the planting grants approved by the Forest Authority in each of the past three years.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The areas of planting for which grants were paid in England, Wales and Scotland are shown in the Forestry Commission's 1989-90 and 1990-91 annual reports in table 2 of appendix XI in each case. Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House. Similar information for 1991-92 will be included in the Commission's annual report to be published in the autumn. I have arranged for provisional figures for that year to be provided to the hon. Member and to be placed in the Library.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Disabled Employers

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively and overall in her Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Information cannot be provided in the form requested but overall numbers were 1,688 registered disabled people (3·2 per cent.) at June 1991, the latest date for which figures are available. The Department also employs other people with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

*Note*

1. Staff working less than 10 hours per week are not included.

2. Staff working between 10 and 30 hours per week are counted as half staff units.

### Travel to Interview Scheme

**Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will abolish the upper salary limit for the travel to interview scheme.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

### Industrial Tribunals

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance she gives to employees about the entitlement of lay members of industrial tribunals to paid time off work for tribunal duties.

**Mr McLoughlin:** People who are invited to become industrial tribunal lay members are informed that they are entitled under legislation to reasonable time off work for tribunal duties. There is no entitlement under the law to paid time off for such duties.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps she is taking to increase the number of women serving as lay members on industrial tribunals.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment, is anxious to increase the number of women serving on industrial tribunals as on other bodies, and we have taken steps to encourage suitable women to come forward for appointment from October 1992. Last year my predecessor, in asking bodies to nominate suitable candidates, stressed the desirability of increasing the number of women appointed. He also asked other bodies, including the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women's National Commission to take what steps they could to encourage suitable women to apply. Officials in the Department organised a seminar for these bodies at which the need to encourage suitable women was stressed, and the information provided to interested inquirers and the press publicity about the appointment arrangements also emphasised this point.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance she gives to lay members of industrial tribunals about the number of days they should expect to sit on tribunal duties.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Individuals who are offered appointment to the panels of industrial tribunal lay members are told they may be asked to sit at least 15 days a year.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give a date when she will announce the areas of work in her Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** As promised in the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", departmental targets for market testing in 1992-93 will be announced later this year.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in her Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I am unable to provide full-cost information.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of savings in her Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** No such estimate has been made. The aim of market testing is to provide a better service to the customer as well as better value for money. We cannot predict in advance what the effect of the future market testing programme will be on the quality of service and costs, but we shall be looking for improvements in both.

## HEALTH

### Pharmaceutical Information

**Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the regulations or guidelines which enable pharmaceutical companies to acquaint doctors with their products but preclude them from doing so in respect of nurses; and what plans she has to change these arrangements with the extension of limited prescribing powers to certain categories of nurses.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Regulations made under the Medicines Act 1968 do not preclude pharmaceutical companies from acquainting nurses with their products, although the advertising of prescription medicines which may be administered by nurses is confined to nursing journals. Regulations also provide that prescription medicines may be advertised to those who may lawfully prescribe them.

### Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those professions which are covered by the Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act 1960; what plans she has to review the Act and to extend it to include further such professions; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The Act currently covers chiropodists, dietitians, medical laboratory technicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, radiographers and orthoptists. Under section 10 of the Act, it is for the Council for

Professions Supplementary to Medicine to propose any extension of its scope to other groups. There are no plans at present to review the Act.

### Immunology

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the numbers of consultant immunologists in each regional health authority, and the special health authorities, at the most recent available date.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The Department's September 1990 medical manpower census—the latest date for which figures are available centrally—records one consultant immunologist in each of the East Anglian and South West Thames regional health authorities and two consultant immunologists in the Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's special health authority. Other immunologists with general medical responsibilities are likely to have been recorded under general medicine rather than immunology.

### NHS Expenditure

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure per head in each region and nationally of *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* general practitioner services, excluding the cost of the prescriptions, *(c)* general dental services, gross and net dental charges and *(d)* general practitioner—prescribed prescriptions, for 1991-92.

**Mr. Sackville:** Information derived from the 1991-92 annual accounts of health authorities and family health services authorities will be available in the autumn.

### Abortion

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps have been taken to ensure that her Department's guidelines and arrangements for counselling on abortion, have been followed in each district health authority;

(2) if she will list the applications made by local authorities for the funding of pilot projects concerned with counselling on abortion as envisaged under health circular HC(77)26 together with the name of the health authority, the sum requested, the year of application, whether or not funding was granted and the sum granted.

**Mr. Sackville:** Health circular (77)26 was issued in 1977 following the report of the Lane committee on the working of the Abortion Act 1967. The arrangements introduced at that time for funding training from central funds were designed to enhance existing local training facilities through pilot projects, if needed. The arrangements were not intended to be permanent or long-running. Records of take-up are no longer available. It is now the responsibility of local management to ensure that staff are properly trained in counselling skills where this is relevant to their work.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of inspections of each of the places approved for the purposes of section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 since they were first approved under that section.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Once approval is given under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967, those places using all of their beds for abortions are visited at least twice a year. Other approved places have at least one visit a year.

### Factor 8

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the operation of the Medicines Act (Exemptions from Licences) (Importation) Order 1984—SI, 1984, No. 673—in relation to named patient arrangements for the supply of unlicensed factor 8 preparations and other unlicensed pharmaceutical products.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Applications for the import of unlicensed factor 8 as with all unlicensed medicines are subject to the provisions of SI 1984 No. 673—the Medicines (Exemption from Licences) (Importation) Order. This makes provision to meet a need for a particular product where there is no equivalent licensed product available on the United Kingdom market or if such a licence has been granted, the medicinal product is not in practice available.

Sale or supply of exempted products is restricted to the conditions specified in the order.

Each import exemption is limited to a quantity not exceeding that sufficient for 25 single administrations or for 25 courses of treatment not exceeding three months.

In deciding whether or not to allow importation the Medicines Control Agency considers: the facilities and conditions relating to manufacture, the quality of material being imported and whether the medicinal product can be regarded as a product which can be safely administered to human beings or whether the product is of satisfactory quality for such administration.

### Cervical Cancer

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the efficacy of the current test for screening for cervical cancer; and what action she is taking to reduce the number of tests which prove negative when cancer is present.

**Mr. Sackville:** The effectiveness of the "pap" smear test for cervical cancer screening has been demonstrated by experience in Canada, the Grampian region and Nordic countries with noteworthy decreases in the incidence and mortality due to cervical cancer.

The Department advised health authorities in health circular HC(88)1, a copy of which is available in the Library, of the recommendation for a comprehensive education programme to train doctors and nurses in how to take satisfactory smears. In order to ensure that there are continuing improvements in laboratory standards when processing smears, the Department issued guidance on a protocol for a proficiency testing scheme in gynaecological cytopathology for laboratory staff. This advised of the need for regional cytopathology external quality assurance groups and the Department set up a national co-ordinating committee to promote accuracy in reporting smear test results.

### AIDS

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department's chief medical officer has given the public about sexual activity involving an

individual suffering with HIV or AIDS; what is the latest estimate of the risk of contracting the disease when a condom is *(a)* used and *(b)* not used; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** Data are available from the results of "The European Study Group on Heterosexual Transmission of HIV", published in March 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library. Couples where one partner was already infected with HIV were followed up six-monthly. Among 44 couples using condoms intermittently, six women were infected with HIV. No partners were infected in 24 couples using condoms consistently.

The AIDS public education campaign has encouraged the use of condoms as a means of protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

## Ultraviolet Radiation

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department has received from the expert advisory Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment regarding ultraviolet radiation and health.

**Mr. Sackville:** In response to a recent request from the United Kingdom Health Departments, COMARE has now furnished advice on ultraviolet radiation (UV) and adverse health effects in the context of existing public health advice on minimising UV exposure, and the need for further research. In particular, COMARE was asked to consider its advice against a background of evidence of a raised incidence of skin cancer in the United Kingdom and recent concerns about changes in solar UV levels secondary to possible changes in the stratospheric ozone layer.

COMARE concludes that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that skin cancer incidence is related to exposure to UV radiation, and that risk is determined largely by patterns of exposure to existing levels of solar UV radiation, which is influenced by people's lifestyle. The committee makes a number of recommendations relating to additional public health advice on minimising exposure to natural and artificial sources of UV, and on common standards for consumer information for sunglasses and sunscreen products. The Government accept the committee's recommendations and the Health Departments are considering urgently how best to implement them. The Government note COMARE's intention to consider research needs further in the light of relevant research currently under way or planned.

The Government are grateful to COMARE for its work in this area and looks forward to receiving further advice on research needs. Following is the full text of the committee's advice:

Statement of advice from COMARE to Health Departments

*Health effects of ultra violet radiation*

INTRODUCTION

1. The United Kingdom Health Departments have asked COMARE to consider the adverse health effects of UV radiation (UVR) in relation to existing public health advice on minimising UV exposure, and the need for further research. This has been considered against a background of:

(a) evidence of an increased incidence of all skin cancers, and in particular the increase in malignant melanoma (MM) over recent years, and

(b) whether there is a need to issue additional advice in the light of the recent concerns that solar UV levels might be altered secondary to possible changes in the stratospheric ozone layer.

HEALTH EFFECTS

2. The Committee have noted with concern that there has been a 50 per cent. increase in the incidence of malignant melanoma in England and Wales (1,827 cases in 1980 rising to 2,635 cases in 1986). The much more common, although seldom fatal, forms of skin cancer which are grouped as non-melanotic skin cancers (NMSC) increased from 19,000 cases in 1980 to over 25,000 cases in 1986. We consider that this rising incidence of skin cancers constitutes a public health problem in the United Kingdom. Other health effects are known to be associated with excessive exposure to UVR, and additional research is needed in these areas.

3. We consider that there is sufficient evidence to show that skin cancer incidence is related to exposure to UV radiation and that risk is determined largely by patterns of exposure to existing levels of solar UV radiation which is influenced by people's occupation and behaviour. The risk however, varies with the degree of skin pigmentation, being greatest in the skin type with red hair and fair skin which does not tan.

CANCER REGISTRATION

4. The Committee reiterates its view that skin cancer registration procedures should be improved so that the statistics can be updated more regularly. It was recognised by the working party chaired by Professor Eva Alberman which reported last year on the national cancer registration scheme (Series MB1 No. 17) that better and more timely figures were required. Many of the working party's 17 recommendations are currently being taken forward by the cancer registries in the regional health authorities and by the NHS information management group in the Department. COMARE has previously expressed its support for this review.

SOLAR MONITORING

5. The Committee note that the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) set up three experimental solar UV monitoring stations in the United Kingdom in 1988, and that the instrumentation of these units has subsequently been improved. We acknowledge the value of these measurements in providing baseline data for any changes which may occur in the future. We welcome the NRPB proposal to extend this scheme to latitudes further north and south to provide a more comprehensive picture of the terrestrial solar UV levels over United Kingdom latitudes.

6. The Committee note the widespread concerns about long term stratospheric ozone depletion and support the initiatives already being taken by the signatories to the Montreal Protocol to reduce the release of ozone-depleting chemicals into the atmosphere.

7. We note that seasonal variations in solar UV levels, and short term variations due to cloud cover and local weather, are far in excess of any long term UV changes currently anticipated as a result of stratospheric ozone depletion. For this reason it would not be helpful to publish daily information on solar UVR levels; such retrospective information would be of little practical value. It should be recognised that currently the most important factor in a person's exposure to solar UVR is lifestyle and we recommend that there is a need to inform the public of the risks of excessive exposure to sunlight.

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

8. We consider that considerable additional scientific information on the health effects of UV is required to enable a more accurate assessment of the various aspects of health risk and to facilitate effective targeting of public health education (see 10 below). Whilst a clear association between non-melanotic skin cancer and cumulative UV exposure has been demonstrated, the relationship between UV exposure and malignant melanoma trends needs further consideration. We will consider further research needs in the light of ongoing work, in particular the work of the NRPB Advisory Group on non-ionising radiations.

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVICE

9. We endorse the general content and basis of existing health advice as set out in the Health Education Authority leaflet ("Are you dying to get a suntan?"), and agree that there is a need to reinforce certain important aspects. In particular the Committee recommend that there is a need to advise about the potential longterm dangers of sunburn to children and babies, and to emphasise the need for individuals to develop a better awareness of their own skin's sensitivity to solar UVR, bearing in mind the very great variation in sensitivity which exists between different members of the population.

10. We fully endorse the Health Department's proposal to reinforce existing public health advice on UV, and to consider the specific health advice given to users of sunbeds/sunlamps and tungsten halogen lamps and recommend that this be taken forward urgently. We also support proposals to consider the application of common standards to consumer information for sunglasses and suntan products. The Committee wish to be kept fully informed of progress in these areas.

## Herbicides

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will outline the possible effects of human consumption of the pesticides atrazine and simazine.

**Mr. Sackville:** No adverse health effects have been detected in humans from the approved United Kingdom agricultural and non-agricultural uses of these herbicides. In some experiments where doses hundreds of times the highest estimated human intake in the United Kingdom have been fed to laboratory rats, the incidence of mammary tumours was increased.

The independent and statutory Advisory Committee on Pesticides has confirmed that the levels of atrazine and simazine found in some drinking water supplies in the United Kingdom do not endanger the health of consumers. Residues of these chemicals have not been found in food crops.

The United Kingdom has a legal obligation to comply with the European Community's drinking water directive —80/778/EEC—which sets very stringent limits on non-toxicological grounds, and restrictions on the use of both these herbicides were announced in May 1992. Approvals for non-crop use, which is the main source of water contamination, will be revoked on 31 August 1993 and further restrictions will apply to all other uses from the same date.

## Ambulance Services

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which ambulance stations have been closed in Greater Manchester over the last three months; how many times; and for how long.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. E. S. Schofield, the chairman of Bury health authority, which is responsible for the management of the Greater Manchester ambulance service.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to answer questions on the running of the ambulance service.

**Mr. Sackville:** NHS ambulance services are contracted to provide patient transport services by purchasing health authorities which are responsible for the delivery of those services. Ambulance service policy is a matter for Ministers.

## General Practitioner Beds

**Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it remains Government policy, as set out by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health in a letter to the hon. Member for Twickenham on 25 July 1990, that Teddington memorial hospital and the general practitioner beds within it have a secure future for as long as general practitioners and patients continue to want to use them; if the Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton district health authority has been made aware that this is Government policy; if she will ask the authority to comply; and if she will inform the hon. Member for Twickenham of the result.

**Mr. Sackville:** I have recently visited Teddington memorial hospital.

All health authorities are obliged to consider carefully the health needs of their population and should ensure that in contracting for health services, both acute and in the community, they have consulted local people including, for example, GPs.

**Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the occupancy rate for the 27 general practitioner beds at the Teddington memorial hospital; and what representations she has received from general practitioners, and from the applicants for trust status concerning the demand for continuation of provision of general practitioner beds.

**Mr. Sackville:** Information on bed occupancy rates is not collected centrally.

Local GPs and staff at Teddington memorial have written to Ministers expressing their concern about the provision of general practitioner beds. I will reply shortly.

**Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what powers she has to require a district health authority acting as a purchasing authority to provide for the purchase of general practitioner beds where there is clear evidence of demand from general practitioners and their patients.

**Mr. Sackville:** District health authorities are expected to purchase a wide range of health services for their local populations. The level and type of services purchased are for the authorities themselves to determine in the light of local needs and priorities.

## Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in her Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Sackville:** The estimated cost of the market-testing initiative in the Department since November 1991 is in the order of £150,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of savings in her Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Sackville:** No such estimate has been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give a date when she will announce the areas of work in her Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June, column *102*.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Curry:** The information is set out in the table, being non-industrial staff in post on 29 June 1992 in MAFF and its agencies. (Part-time staff are counted as 0·5).

| *Grade/grade equivalent* | *Female staff in post* *Number* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0·0 | 0·0 |
| 2 | 1·0 | 12·5 |
| 3 | 2·0 | 7·7 |
| 4 | 0·0 | 0·0 |
| 5 | 11·0 | 9·2 |
| 6 | 11·5 | 7·1 |
| 7 | 137·5 | 14·7 |
| | 163·0 | 12·9 |

The total number of women in the Department and its agencies is 4,293·5. This is 43·5 per cent. of total staff.

The female grade 2 is the chief executive of the Agricultural Development Advisory Service.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the likely future incidence of BSE; when he expects the outbreak to peak and at what level; and when he now expects the disease to disappear in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Soames:** It is impossible to predict accurately the future incidence of BSE since it is not known how many cattle received sufficient inefective agent in feed to cause disease. Nevertheless, 1992 is expected to be the peak year in relation to the number of confirmed cases. And all the evidence continues to show that the ruminant feed ban, introduced in July 1988, is the key measure which will ultimately lead to the eradication of BSE. It is not expected that the effect of the ban will be reflected in a decline in the annual total number of cases until next year. Thereafter it is expected that there will be a clear downward trend until the ultimate disappearance of the disease, possibly by the end of the 1990s.

### Bovine Somatotropin

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the use of bovine somatotropin in the United Kingdom after 1992.

**Mr. Soames:** Within the Community the use of BST except in authorised field trials is banned until the end of 1993. The Commission is obliged to present a report including appropriate proposals for subsequent arrangements before 30 June 1993.

### Clenbuterol

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to this answer of 19 June, *Official Report*, column *685*, if he will list the number of cases, of which the Department are aware, of beef cattle fed with the drug clenbuterol entering the United Kingdom and their country of origin.

**Mr. Soames:** None.

### Herbicides

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the uses of the pesticides atrazine and simazine.

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 21 May, *Official Report*, col. *252*.

### Abattoirs

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be able to tell abattoir owners whether their applications for derogation from upgrading their plants to EC standards have been successful.

**Mr. Soames:** The Department's veterinary officers are currently in the process of visiting all fresh meat premises seeking derogations in order to upgrade to the new EC structural standards. Before a derogation can be granted, a detailed work plan must be agreed between the plant and the Department. This work is proceeding as quickly as possible and owners will be informed individually about the outcome of their derogation applications.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Curry:** The full cost of the market testing initiative in the Department since November 1991 has been £44,000.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Curry:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice), on 22 June 1992, *Official Report*, col. *102*.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Curry:** No such forward estimate has been made.

### Grass-growing Machines

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he has undertaken into the effectiveness of hydroponic grass-growing machines as a provider of food for stabled horses.

**Mr. Curry:** None.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations his Department has received in respect of the quality and effectiveness of hydroponic grass-growing machines.

**Mr. Curry:** I am not aware of any representations on this matter.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Curry:** The information set out as at 29 June 1992 relates to MAFF staff and its agencies. Part-time staff are counted as 0·5. Figures have been aggregated to preserve individuals' confidentiality.

| *Grade/ Grade equivalent* | *Registered disabled* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *Percentage* |
| 1-7 | 4 | 0·3 |

The total number of known registered disabled staff in the Department and its agencies is 126·5. This is 1·3 per cent. of total staff.

These figures do not include staff with disabilities who have chosen not to register.

### Agriculture Council

**Dr. Spink:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Agriculture Council held on 30 June.

**Mr. Gummer:** I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the Council.

The regulations implementing the Council's decisions of 21 May on common agricultural policy reform and on 1992-93 farm prices were formally adopted. Despite pressure from some delegations, no changes were made to the agreement. The Commission made a number of declarations on subjects of concern to particular delegations, but these do not commit the United Kingdom or the Council.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Subsidiarity

**Ms. Quin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what definition of subsidiarity was used in the discussions between EC regional policy Ministers in Lisbon on 15-16 May.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting. No precise definition of subsidiarity was used. However, subsidiarity is generally defined in the Community context as the principle that the Community should take action only when objectives cannot be achieved at the level of individual member states acting alone, and that such action should not exceed the minimum necessary to achieve those objectives.

### Internal Market Council

**Ms. Quin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the matters to be discussed at the next meeting of the EC Internal Market Council; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** I will chair the next Internal Market Council on 22 September.

The agenda will not be finalised until early September.

### Telephone Faults

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with Oftel on the priority telephone fault repair service for the disabled; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** My right hon. Friend and I meet the Director General of OFTEL from time to time to discuss a wide range of telecommunications issues. He fully shares the Government's view of the importance of a free priority fault repair service for those disabled customers whose lives depend on having constant telephone access to outside medical help.

### Accidents at Home

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the toy industry regarding delays in publication of statistics for accidents in the home.

**Mr. Leigh:** No representations have been received from the toy industry regarding delays in the publication of statistics on accidents in the home.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the hospitals surveyed by his Department for the production of statistics on accidents in the home.

**Mr. Leigh:** The hospitals currently collecting data for the home accident surveillance system (HASS) are as follows:

North Tees general hospital, Stockton-on-Tees
Luton and Dunstable hospital, Luton
Skegness and District hospital, Skegness
Selly Oak hospital, Birmingham
Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil
Royal Berkshire hospital, Reading
Mount Vernon hospital, Hillingdon
Macclesfield district general, Macclesfield
Manor hospital, Nuneaton
William Harvey hospital, Ashford, Kent
Blackburn royal infirmary, Blackburn
Daisy Hill hospital, Newry, Co. Down
Monklands district hospital, Airdrie
Kings Collegee hospital, Denmark Hill
Hereford general hospital, Hereford
Queen Mary's university hospital, Roehampton
Airedale general hospital, Keighley
Bournemouth general hospital, Bournemouth
NB The North Devon district hospital, Barnstaple will replace William Harvey hospital in November 1992.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to publish statistics for accidents in the home for the years 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Leigh:** The target dates for publication of the Department's home accident surveillance system statistics for the years specified are as follows:
1990: October 31 1992
1991: July 31 1993

## EC Regulations

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many EC regulations have been introduced this year which apply to matters covered by his Department.

**Mr. Needham:** For the year, up to and including the 19 June 1992, some 36 EC regulations were introduced for which the Department of Trade and Industry has overall responsibility.

## Trade Statistics

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the annual output, United Kingdom market size and trade balance for activity headings 3301, 3302, 3441, 3443, 3453, and 3454 for each complete year from 1987.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The information is shown in the table.

*Sales*[2]

| SIC[1] | 3301 | 3302 | 3441 | 3443 | 3453 | 3454 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | £ millions | | | |
| 1987 | 268 | 4,352 | 1,669 | 2,958 | 1,168 | 1,079 |
| 1988 | 270 | 5,229 | 1,970 | 3,189 | 1,335 | 1,199 |
| 1989 | 295 | 5,695 | 2,137 | 3,171 | 1,487 | 1,203 |
| 1990 | 251 | 6,388 | 1,883 | 3,335 | 1,619 | 1,501 |
| 1991 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |

*Home demand*[3]

| SIC[1] | 3301 | 3302 | 3441 | 3443 | 3453 | 3454 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | £ millions | | | |
| 1987 | 607 | 4,900 | 1,945 | 2,812 | 1,752 | 1,810 |
| 1988 | 295 | 6,120 | 2,321 | 2,868 | 2,129 | 2,020 |
| 1989 | 272 | 7,059 | 2,374 | 3,013 | 2,334 | 2,023 |
| 1990 | 147 | 7,710 | 2,045 | 3,101 | 2,220 | 2,010 |
| 1991 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |

*Balance of Trade*

| SIC[1] | 3301 | 3302 | 3441 | 3443 | 3453 | 3454 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | £ millions | | | |
| 1987 | −340 | −548 | −276 | 146 | −584 | −731 |
| 1988 | −25 | −891 | −351 | 321 | −794 | −821 |
| 1989 | 23 | −1,365 | −238 | 157 | −848 | −819 |
| 1990 | 103 | −1,322 | −162 | 234 | −601 | −509 |
| 1991 | 170 | −1,045 | −123 | 198 | −677 | −257 |

[1] Standard Industrial Classification (1980):
3301 Office machinery.
3302 Electronic data processing equipment.
3441 Telegraph and telephone equipment.
3443 Radio and electronic capital goods.
3453 Electronic sub-assemblies and active components.
3454 Electronic consumer goods and miscellaneous equipment.
[2] Sales of principal products of each industry.
[3] Home demand = Sales + Imports − Exports.
.. Data not available.
Data source: CSO.

## Trans-European Networks

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the implications of the proposals for Trans-European networks contained in articles 129b, c and d of the treaty on European union for equalisation on harmonisation of the relevant system costs, or costs to the consumers or users of such designated networks.

**Mr. Needham:** Action by the Community on Trans-European Networks in energy telecommunications and transport, provided for in articles 129b to 129d of the treaty on European union, is to be aimed at promoting interconnection and inter-operability of national networks within a framework of open and competitive markets. If the Community succeeds in encouraging larger and more liberalised networks, this can be expected to lead to greater competition and thus to bring prices for consumers and users more closely into line with costs.

## Mersey Barrage

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial assistance was given from public funds by Her Majesty's Government towards the Travers Morgan economic study for the Mersey Barrage Company; and what percentage that was of the total cost.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Government's contribution to the Travers Morgan Economic study for the Mersey Barrage Company was £77,391·50. This was 50 per cent. of the total cost of that study.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance he has given to the Mersey Barrage Company on cost benefit analysis, including the likely environmental costs, in assessing the viability of any future barrage scheme.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Mersey Barrage Company commissioned the consultants Travers Morgan Economics to undertake a cost benefit analysis of the Mersey barrage. The methodology adopted for assessing environmental costs reflected the consultant's views, at that time, of the most appropriate valuation mechanism. The analysis included an evaluation of the cost of creating lost habitat for wildfowl and some plants caused by the Barrage scheme. The Mersey Barrage Company has discussed these costs with its Environmental working party, which includes statutory organisations and environmental interest groups. Government officials have been in discussion with the Mersey Barrage Company on the methodology and results of the cost benefit analysis. The

Government consider a proper assessment of the environmental impact of the barrage a key issue in appraising the scheme.

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the depleted uranium stockpiled at civil nuclear facilities has been re-enriched for use in United Kingdom or foreign nuclear programmes since 1955.

**Mr. Eggar:** Over 15,000 tonnes of depleted uranium from the reprocessing of magnox irradiated fuel have been enriched for use in civil nuclear fuel.

### Sub-Sahara Africa

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total value of exports to sub-Saharan Africa during 1990; if he will give a breakdown of the main items; and what was the total value of United Kingdom exports and imports from sub-Saharan Africa during 1990 and for the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Needham:** Details of trade with sub-Saharan Africa are published in the overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom.

### Coal Privatisation

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what expressions of interest he has received from potential purchasers of British Coal; and if he wil make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** A number of unions and companies have expressed an interest in purchasing all or part of the coal industry. It is a matter for the organisations themselves whether they wish their interest to be made public.

### Regional Assistance

**Mr. Shore:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the level of the United Kingdom's receipts from the European regional fund of the European Community in each year since 1985; and what is the total size of the ERF in the same period.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* European regional development fund receipts since 1985 are shown in the table.

*European regional development fund receipts*

| | *Total EC mecu* | *United Kingdom mecu* | *Percentage share* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1985 | 1,624 | 484 | 29·8 |
| 1986 | 2,484 | 507 | 20·4 |
| 1987 | 2,535 | 527 | 20·8 |
| 1988 | 3,093 | 578 | 18·7 |
| 1989 | 3,920 | 612 | 15·6 |
| 1990 | 4,554 | 465 | 10·2 |
| 1991 | 5,181 | 483 | 9·3 |

### Timeshare

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Director General of Fair Trading will examine the suitability of William Montgomery, director of International Resort Sales and Travel Ltd., to hold a credit licence.

**Mr. Leigh:** Consumer credit licensing is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading and I will draw the hon. Member's question to his attention.

### Instruments of Torture

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to tighten restrictions governing the granting of permits to export components which can be used as instruments of torture; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 18 May 1992, *Official Report*, column 22.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the total cost so far of the market testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Eggar:** An estimate of the total cost since November 1991 is not available.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market testing programme.

**Mr. Eggar:** No such estimate has been made.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Eggar:** As promised in the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", departmental targets for market testing in 1992-93 will be announced later this year.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* No such appointment has been made.

### Coal Industry

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether, following the special arrangements for Britain arrived at on the EC working time directives, the Government intend to proceed with the repeal of the Coal Miners Regulations Act 1908.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* We do not envisage repealing the 1908 Act until the proposed EC directive has been implemented.

**Mr. Dobson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changed working practices British Coal have negotiated with representatives of its work force since the passage of the Coal Industry Act 1992.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what support he has given to promoting United Kingdom investment in the Colombian state-owned coal-mining industry.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* My Department held a seminar in London on 29 April to draw energy opportunities in Colombia, including investment opportunities, to the attention of United Kingdom industry.

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to provide Government support for British Coal's anti-dumping claim against Colombian coal imported initially into the EC and then into the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The Government raised no objection to the European Commission opening an investigation into British Coal's anti-dumping complaint because it is only by investigation that the full facts of the matter can be established. It is now for the Commission to decide whether the allegations in the complaint are such that an investigation is warranted.

### Inmos

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list the dates of all approaches he has made to M. Carpentier, head of D.G. XIII of the European Commission, concerning the threatened closure of Inmos;

(2) if he will list the dates of contacts he has initiated with D.G. XVI of the European Commission, concerning the threatened closure of Inmos;

(3) what discussions he has had with the European Commission on any proposal to relocate Inmos to another site in the United Kingdom;

(4) if he will list the dates and outcome of all contacts and meetings he has had with each directorate of the European Commission on the future of Inmos.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* Discussions took place on 10 June with the Commission about Inmos's request for a £30 million grant to support its proposed £60 million investment in Newport.

This request far exceeds the level of support we would normally consider for investment projects in the Newport area. The Commission has however made it clear that there can be no prospect of United Kingdom Government aid at the level sought, and the company has been told.

Although I am not aware of any proposals by the company to locate elsewhere in the United Kingdom, we remain ready to discuss matters with it.

### Brazilian Mahogany

**Mr. Cann:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many cubic metres of Brazilian mahogany were imported into the United Kingdom in 1991.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* The only information which relates to mahogany imported from Brazil is that which has been sawn or chipped lengthwise, sliced or peeled, of a thickness exceeding 6mm, defined as code 440723901 of the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3. Under this heading there were 45,762 cubic metres of mahogany imported into the United Kingdom from Brazil in 1991.

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Cann:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will ensure that a public inquiry will be held before Nuclear Electric is allowed to build the proposed Sizewell C.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* On 9 November 1989 the Secretary of State for Energy informed the House that no capital expenditure approval would be given to Nuclear Electric plc. for any new nuclear station beyond Sizewell B pending the outcome of a review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom, which will be undertaken in 1994. That remains the position.

It also remains the case that, before reaching his decision on any application for his consent to construct and operate an electricity generating station my right hon. Friend is obliged to hold a public inquiry into the application of a relevant local planning authority has objected to it.

If there is no objection from a relevant local planning authority, my right hon. Friend may still call for a public inquiry to be held at his own discretion.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library copies of all correspondence since 1990 between himself or his predecessor, and the chairmen of *(a)* Nuclear Electric, *(b)* British Nuclear Fuels plc. and *(c)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on the matter of future development plans of each organisation.

**Mr. Eggar** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* I meet the chairmen of these companies regularly to discuss a range of issues. Future development plans are commercial matters for the companies concerned.

### Steel

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement concerning his policy to encourage the export of steel products.

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* My Department supports the export efforts of the steel industry—as of British industry as a whole—by providing, through the Overseas Trade Services, a comprehensive range of information, advice, services and practical assistance.

The United Kingdom is keen to secure an effective multilateral steel agreement and supports the European Commission efforts to resume talks on the outstanding issues.

## DEFENCE

### Air Force Training

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Euro-NATO training group consideration of alternative means of meeting NATO air force training requirements following the abandonment of plans for a NATO tactical fighter training centre;

(2) if he will make a statement on his future plans for provision of training for RAF strike/attack units following the abandonment of plans for a NATO tactical fighter training centre.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Although there are no plans at present to continue with the NATO tactical fighter training centre, the project has not been abandoned. The partner nations of the Euro-NATO training group, including the United Kingdom, continue to investigate

alternative means of meeting training requirements. Training for RAF strike/attack units will continue mainly in the United Kingdom, but with regular participation in NATO, North American and other overseas exercises.

## Low Flying

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many operational low-flying movements have been authorised in each of the tactical training areas in each month since June 1991.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The information requested is as follows:

| | *Northern Scotland* | *Central Wales* | *Borders* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1991* | | | |
| June | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| July | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| August | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| September | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| October | 54 | 0 | 38 |
| November | 47 | 18 | 188 |
| December | 85 | 3 | 382 |
| *1992* | | | |
| January | 70 | 2 | 141 |
| February | 99 | 21 | 361 |
| March | 271 | 7 | 263 |
| April | 57 | 8 | 187 |

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low flying were received from addresses located within each of the numbered low-flying areas in the United Kingdom during 1991.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Low flying areas* | *Numbers of complaints or inquiries* |
|---|---|
| 1 | 62 |
| 2 | 735 |
| 3 | 21 |
| 4 | 320 |
| 5 | 430 |
| 6 | 292 |
| 7 | 791 |
| 8 | 230 |
| 9 | 16 |
| 11 | 424 |
| 12 | 160 |
| 13 | 15 |
| 14 | 352 |
| 16 | 291 |
| 17 | 466 |
| 18 | 204 |

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were carried out in each low-flying area in the United Kingdom in each month since January 1991.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Records are not kept of the number of low-flying sorties carried out in each low-flying area in the United Kingdom. The total number of sorties flown from January 1991 to April 1992, the most recent months for which figures are available, is 173,470.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were carried out by Royal Air Force aircraft from Canadian forces base Goose Bay in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures by aircraft type.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Aircraft Type* | *1990* | *1991* |
|---|---|---|
| Tornado GR1 | 819 | 481 |
| Tornado F3 | 82 | 0 |
| Harrier | 14 | 4 |

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties have been flown by *(a)* RAF Tornado strike/attack aircraft, and *(b)* RAF Tornado F3 aircraft, during each Distant Frontier exercise in Alaska since 1990.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The information requested is:

| | *Number of Sorties* |
|---|---|
| *1990* | |
| Tornado G1 | 41 |
| *1992* | |
| Tornado GR1 | 160 |
| Tornado F3 | 75 |

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what height and lateral distance military aircraft are instructed to avoid the village of Dalmellington.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** It is not our practice to release detailed information on flying restrictions in individual areas.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what agreements have been reached with the United States of America authorities concerning *(a)* the use of existing weapons and electronic warfare ranges and low-level training routes and *(b)* the provision of additional weapons, electronic warfare and low-level training facilities, for use by Royal Air Force aircraft deployed to Eielson air force base, Alaska.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Royal Air Force deployments to Eielson air force base, Alaska have been at the invitation of the United States air force. The invitations granted specified use of weapons and electronic warfare ranges and designated low-level training routes and areas. Possible future deployments are being considered with the United States authorities.

## RAF Trainer

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's requirement for a basic flight trainer for the Royal Air Force, showing the scale and nature of the requirement, the timetable for procurement, the aircraft which it is designed to replace, and the approximate overall cost of the programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** Basic flying training in the RAF is undertaken by all trainee pilots, prior to their undertaking more specialised training in other, fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters. At present, flying training is carried out in

either Jet Provost or Tucano aircraft, which are currently replacing the remaining Jet Provost. We expect this replacement to be completed before the end of next year, by which time we will have taken 130 Tucano aircraft into service at an overall cost of some £150 million. We expect the Tucano to meet the RAF's basic flying training requirement until well after the turn of the century.

### Stand-off Missile

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's requirement for a conventionally armed stand-off missile, showing the scale and nature of the requirement, the timetable for procurement, the weapon systems which it is designed to replace, and the approximate overall cost of the programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** We have sought the views of industry on the proposals for conventionally armed, air-launched, stand-off missile to complement the JP233. These responses are currently being assessed. No procurement decisions have been taken.

### Psychiatric Services

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many service personnel received help from the armed forces psychiatric services, or were referred to the national health service psychiatric services, in each year for the last 10 years, other than in respect of the Gulf war;

(2) how many service personnel received help from the armed forces psychiatric services, or were referred to the national health service psychiatric services, as a consequence of the Gulf war.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The numbers of psychiatric treatment episodes in the armed forces, which covers all treatments involving a discharge from a medical unit, in the 10-year period to 1991, are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1982 | 1,109 |
| 1983 | 1,166 |
| 1984 | 1,031 |
| 1985 | 1,081 |
| 1986 | 1,041 |
| [1]1987 | 1,131 |
| 1988 | 1,151 |
| 1989 | 1,204 |
| 1990 | 1,182 |
| [2]1991 | [3]1,126 |

[1] Figures prior to 1987 do not include one day cases.
[2] 1991 figures are provisional.
[3] Includes 68 episodes related to the Gulf War.

### Defence Export Services Organisation

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation are engaged in the administration of the Al Yamamah and Anglo-Malaysian defence exports contracts.

**Mr. Aitken:** A total of 230 staff are engaged in the administration of the Al Yamamah programme, and 24 in the Malaysian project. These offices are separately established and operate on a self financing basis; the numbers are therefore in addition to those I gave to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 18 June, *Official Report*, column 671.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation are engaged on the administration of the International Military Services organisation.

**Mr. Aitken:** There are none.

### War Crimes

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many files relating to war crimes in the Channel Islands during world war two are retained in his Department and withheld from the Public Record Office.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** We have been unable to identify any such files which are retained under the Public Records Act.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Aitken:** As at 1 May 1992, excluding staff in executive agencies, the information requested is as follows:

| | *Number* | *Percentage of staff in grade* |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 1 | 0 | — |
| Grade 2 | 0 | — |
| Grade 3 | [1]1 | 2 |
| Grade 4 | 0 | — |
| Grade 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Grade 6 | 8 | 2 |
| Grade 7 | 56 | 3 |
| Total non-industrial staff | 80,574 | — |
| Total female non-industrial staff | 32,623 | 40 |
| Total industrial staff | 50,895 | — |
| Total female industrial staff | 9,601 | 19 |
| Total staff | 131,469 | — |
| Total female staff | 42,224 | 32 |

[1] On loan from HM Customs and Excise.

### New Navy Ship

**Mr. David Martin :** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy for a forthcoming ship in the Royal Navy to be named after the city of Portsmouth.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The ships names and badges committee has considered the name of Portsmouth, but it has not found favour on account of possible confusion, in communications, between the name of the ship and the naval base.

### Nuclear Arsenals

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for the future size of the United Kingdom nuclear arsenal of the recent agreement between the United States and Russian Presidents to implement reductions in their respective nuclear arsenals.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** We will continue to retain only the minimum nuclear deterrent required for our security needs.

### Troops

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which Vote the cost of sending additional troops to Northern Ireland at the request of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is debited.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The cost is borne on class I, vote 1, personnel costs, support and other services; vote 2, defence procurement and vote 4, works services.

### Housing

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer on 2 June to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North, (Mr. Howarth), *Official Report*, column *529*, what is the nature and type of short-term steps that he is taking to provide assistance to those who find themselves in housing difficulty; and how many personnel have found themselves in housing difficulty.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** I refer the hon. Member to a note entitled "Servicemen's Housing: The Work of the Housing Task Force", a copy of which is in the Library. As well as the measures detailed in this note, the joint service housing advice office was set up in May at Old Sarum to provide advice on a range of housing matters to service personnel. To date, 128 requests have been received for help or information.

### Expenditure

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the current information presented in the Statement on the Defence Estimates provides information on defence expenditures on the basis of the categories set out in the United Nations document "Instrument for Standardised International Reporting of Military Expenditures"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Information provided to the United Nations on defence expenditures is on the basis of categories designed to meet the United Nations's reporting requirements, which differ from those used in the current "Statement on the Defence Estimates"—SDE. There are no plans to adopt the United Nations categorisation for future SDE's although we will continue to review the public presentation of data, as the new management strategy develops, with a view to providing the greatest possible visibility of the defence programme.

### Vienna Document 1992

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to implement the provisions of the Vienna document 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Vienna Document 1992 came into force on 1 May 1992. We will comply fully with its provisions, as we did for the Vienna Document 1990 which it has succeeded.

### Limited Strikes

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart relating to the global protection against limited strikes programme.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Government remain in close touch with the United States Administration on their proposal for limited ballistic missile defences.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what account he has taken of the recent agreements between Russia and the United States of America to reduce stocks of nuclear weapons in the formation of his policy towards United Kingdom participation in a global protection against limited strikes system.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The United State's concept for protection against limited ballistic missile strikes is concerned not with existing deterrent forces, except in the case of accidental or unauthorised launch, but with new risks from instability and proliferation. We support this objective.

### Ballistic Missile Attacks

**Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the requirement for protection against ballistic missile attack for *(a)* British territory and *(b)* British forces overseas; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** We continue to keep the requirement for defence against ballistic missiles under review, in consultation with the US and other NATO allies.

### Air Defence

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what comparative studies his Department is carryying out on the role of surface-to-air missiles and fighter aircraft in the air defence of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department is currently studying the most cost-effective mix of fighters and surface-to-air missiles for United Kingdom air defence. This work is taking into account all relevant factors including the effect of possible counter-measures.

### Vehicle Electronics Research

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the vehicle electronics research defence initiative.

**Mr. Aitken:** This is a matter for the Defence Research Agency—DRA—under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive of the DRA to write to the hon. and learned Member.

### Special Operations Vehicle

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to place an order for the special operations vehicle recently launched by Land-Rover.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department has no plans to place an order for the Land-Rover special operations vehicle at this time.

## Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Aitken:** The market-testing initiative is being pursued as part of the Department's on-going work on efficiency. Its costs cannot be separately identified.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** The MOD's market-testing programme has existed since 1979. Since then, market testing and private sector contracting have secured savings which are estimated to have reached a cumulative total of some £500 million at today's prices.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Aitken:** I have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June, *Official Report* column *102*.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 2 July 1992*

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement.

**Mr. Portillo:** The PSBR in 1991-92 was £14·0 billion. The Financial Statement and Budget Report forecast for 1992-93 is for borrowing of £28·1 billion.

### Crown Estate

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Excheqher what payments have been made to the Consolidated Fund in each year since 1962 in respect of the net surplus of the Crown estate.

**Mr. Lamont:** Payments made by the Crown Estate Commissioners to the Consolidated Fund from 1962 are as follows:

| | *£000s* |
|---|---|
| 1961-62 | 2,190 |
| 1962-63 | 2,380 |
| 1963-64 | 2,470 |
| 1964-65 | 3,200 |
| 1965-66 | 3,525 |
| 1966-67 | 3,600 |
| 1967-68 | 3,725 |
| 1968-69 | 4,050 |
| 1969-70 | 3,800 |
| 1970-71 | 3,850 |
| 1971-72 | 4,550 |
| 1972-73 | 4,700 |
| 1973-74 | 5,200 |
| 1974-75 | 5,450 |
| 1975-76 | 5,300 |
| 1976-77 | 5,000 |
| 1977-78 | 6,500 |
| 1978-79 | 8,250 |
| 1979-80 | 10,000 |
| 1980-81 | 11,400 |
| 1981-82 | 14,000 |
| 1982-83 | 16,000 |
| 1983-84 | 19,000 |
| 1984-85 | 23,000 |
| 1985-86 | 26,500 |
| 1986-87 | 30,000 |
| 1987-88 | 35,000 |
| 1988-89 | 41,000 |
| 1989-90 | 55,000 |
| 1990-91 | 61,000 |
| [1]1991-92 | 70,000 |

[1] Estimate.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the method of scrutiny and verification of the surplus paid into the Consolidated Fund by the Crown Estate Commissioners.

**Mr. Lamont:** Under section 2 of the Crown Estate Act 1961, the Crown Estate Commissioners are required to prepare, for each financial year, statements of account in a form directed by the Treasury. These are submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General for examination and certification. A coy of the certified accounts is laid before Parliament.

### Inflation

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is currently *(a)* the underlying rate of inflation, *(b)* the rate of inflation if the costs of mortgages are excluded, *(c)* the rate of inflation if the costs of gas, water and electricity charges are excluded and *(d)* the rate of inflation if both the costs of mortgages and the costs of gas, water and electricity charges are excluded.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* There is no official measure of the underlying rate of inflation in the United Kingdom. In May this year, the annual inflation rates, as measured by the retail prices index, for the other series were:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| All-items excluding mortgage interest payments | 5·3 |
| All-items excluding water, gas and electricity charges | 4·3 |
| All-items excluding mortgage interest payments, water, gas and electricity | 5·3 |

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* The full cost of the market-testing initiative in my Department since November 1991 is estimated at £150,000.

### Vehicle Excise Duty

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements he has made for ensuring payment of vehicle excise duty by travelling people; what prosecutions for non-payment by such persons have taken place in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I have been asked to reply.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency with the assistance of the police is responsible for enforcing the payment of vehicle excise duty—VED. In 1991-92, 420,000 motorists were penalised for VED evasion. No separate figures are available for prosecutions taken against travelling people, but there is no evidence to suggest that they contribute disproportionately to the loss of revenue through VED evasion.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants were employed on 1 October 1981, 1985, 1989 and 1990, respectively.

**Mr. Dorrell:** There were 679,924 civil servants at 1 October 1981; 595,764 at 1 October 1985; 565,075 at 1 October 1989 and 556,250 at 1 October 1990.

### Inheritance Tax

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer on 18 June, *Official Report*, columns *629-30*, if he will make a statement about his five-yearly reviews of land exemption from inheritance tax; and what action follows such a review.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The five-yearly reviews of cases of land exempted from inheritance tax which are undertaken by the Inland Revenue are in addition to the regular monitoring of such cases by the heritage advisory agencies. The Inland Revenue makes separate inquiry of the landowners to determine whether the undertakings are being observed. Any issues arising are resolved in discussion between the agencies and landowners. If a landowner breaks an undertaking given in respect of conditionally exempt land inheritance tax is chargeable on the current value of the property.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether there is any time limit on agreements on exemption from inheritance tax for granting public access to land; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Once granted, conditional exemption from inheritance tax will continue provided the owner complies with the terms of the undertakings to maintain and preserve the land and provide reasonable public access to it. A sale of the land will trigger an inheritance tax charge on the current value of the land. If the land changes hands on death or by gift, the exemption can continue, provided the new owner enters into appropriate undertakings. If the new owner does not, there will again be an inheritance tax charge on the current value of land.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whose responsibility it is to inform the public about the right of access to land exempted from inheritance tax.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The owner of land that has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax is required to publicise the agreed public access arrangements. In addition, the appropriate heritage advisory agency is able to supply information about public access to heritage land including conditionally exempt land, although land will not be identified as conditionally exempt.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement about the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax by the heritage advisory agencies in England; how often each area of land affected by each agreement is visited; and how many man hours are devoted to this annually;

(2) if he will make a statement about the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax by the heritage advisory agencies in Wales; how often each area of land affected by each agreement is visited; and how many man hours are devoted to this annually;

(3) if he will make a statement about the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax by the heritage advisory agencies in Scotland; how often each area of land affected by each agreement is visited; and how many man hours are devoted to this annually.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The heritage advisory agencies routinely monitor compliance by landowners with the undertakings which they give in return for conditional exemption from inheritance tax. The level and type of monitoring will depend on the facts of each particular case. Details of the number of man hours devoted to the monitoring of such cases are not available.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement about the definition of what constitutes reasonable public access by the heritage advisory agencies in England with regard to exemptions from inheritance tax;

(2) if he will make a statement about the definition of what constitutes reasonable public access by the heritage advisory agencies in Wales with regard to exemptions from inheritance tax;

(3) if he will make a statement about the definition of what constitutes reasonable public access by the heritage advisory agencies in Scotland with regard to exemptions from inheritance tax.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The heritage advisory agencies advise the Inland Revenue as to what constitutes reasonable public access: each case is considered individually on the basis of its own facts.

The heritage advisory agencies take into account all relevant factors, including, for example, existing rights of way. Additional access may involve formalising existing informal access to open land or extending or joining public paths to make a through route. New access may be needed to areas of particular landscape interest if none exists already. For some scientific land it might be necessary to limit public access in order to preserve its character.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how the heritage advisory agencies in England make available to the public the land management plans prepared by landowners on land exempted from inheritance tax; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how the heritage advisory agencies in Wales make available to the public the land management plans prepared by landowners on land exempted from inheritance tax; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how the heritage advisory agencies in Scotland make available to the public the land management plans prepared by landowners on land exempted from inheritance tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The heritage advisory agencies do not make the land management plans available to the public since they contain information which is covered by the normal rules ensuring taxpayers' confidentiality.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### EC Legislation

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the cases currently proceeding against the United Kingdom for alleged non-implementation of EC legislation, stating for each at what stage the proceedings are currently; and if he will make a statement.

**The Attorney-General:** The following cases against the United Kingdom have been referred to the European Court of Justice by the European Commission for alleged non-implementation of EC legislation, and are currently

proceeding: Cases C56/90, C337/89, C40/92 and C279/89. Details of these cases, and the stage the proceedings have reached, are set out in the annex.

*Annex*

| *ECJ case number* | *Details of case* | *Stage of proceedings* |
|---|---|---|
| C279/89 | Imposition of conditions by United Kingdom as to operation and crewing of fishing vessels. | Oral hearing took place on 17 March 1992 in ECJ. Advocate General's Opinion delivered 12 May 1992. Judgment of ECJ awaited. |
| C337/89 | Alleged failure by United Kingdom to implement Council Directive 80/778/EEC relating to quality of drinking water and levels of concentrations of nitrates and lead in water in certain areas of the United Kingdom. | Oral hearing has taken place. Advocate General's Opinion delivered on 21 January 1992. Judgment of ECJ awaited. |
| C56/90 | Alleged breach by United Kingdom of Council Directive 76/160 concerning the quality of bathing water in relation to the bathing area in Blackpool and adjacent to Formby and Southport. | Oral hearing in ECJ set for 27 October 1992. |
| C40/92 | Alleged breach by United Kingdom of requirements of Community law with regard to production and marketing of processed milk. | United Kingdom has lodged defence to Commission's application. Commission has until 6 July 1992 to file a reply if it wishes. Application by Commission for interim measures dismissed by President of Court on 22 May 1992. |

## EDUCATION

### Access Funds

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the institutions which have already dispersed their allocation of the current year's access funds as at 26 June.

**Mr. Forman:** The information is not kept centrally. It is for individual institutions to decide how best to distribute their access funds allocations over the academic year. The Department's guidance advises institutions to consider holding back some of their access funds until late in the academic year. We will be monitoring in the autumn the proportion held back to assist students in this summer term and long vacation.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Criminal Courts (Docks)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will consider abolishing the use of the dock in criminal courts when the defendant is on bail or not in custody.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The use of the dock is one of the issues under consideration by the Royal Commission on criminal justice. My Department will consider the matter in the light of any recommendations the royal commission may take.

## TRANSPORT

### Motorway Service Areas

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average number of motorway service areas per 100 miles on British motorways.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Motorways in Wales and Scotland are the responsibilities of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland. In England there are on average 2·6 motorway service areas per 100 miles of motorway.

### Grove Green Road

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents, including fatal ones, there have been in Grove Green road, Leyton and Leytonstone in each of the last three years; and what plans he has to reduce their incidence.

**Mr. Norris:** On Grove Green road from its junction with High road, Leyton to its junction with Church lane, excluding end junctions, there were 10 accidents in 1989, 21 in 1990 and 15 in 1991 giving a total of 46; of these one was fatal, eight serious and 37 slight. We are already looking at the Ruckhold road and Grove Green section of the A106 in Waltham Forest to identify the need for accident prevention measures. The implementation of red route measures should also help to reduce incidents. When completed the planned link road between Hackney Wick and the M11 motorway should relieve Grove Green road of most of its through traffic, and help to improve road safety.

### Itchen Navigation

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 June, *Official Report*, columns *29-30*, now navigation rights for vessels will be maintained along the section of the Itchen navigation placed in a tunnel.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** An undertaking has been given to excavate a new channel for craft to use if positive steps are taken to restore the Itchen navigation as a navigable waterway.

## M25

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish a list of those properties that would have to be acquired if his plans to improve the M25 motorway between junctions 12 and 15 are implemented;

(2) if he will publish a full list of addresses of properties that have been sent the official leaflet setting out his plans to improve the M25 between junctions 12 and 15;

(3) if, following his announcement on 25 June of improvements to the M25 between junctions 12 and 15, he will now publish the proposals for linking a new fifth terminal at Heathrow airport to the M25 motorway.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Twenty-four residential and eight commercial properties would need to be demolished under the current preferred proposal for link roads between junctions 12 and 15 of the M25. The gardens of a further seven properties would also be affected. The occupiers of these properties have been notified of the proposals. Detailed plans of the proposals showing the affected properties will be available at exhibitions to be held locally.

Some 2,300 explanatory brochures have been distributed by hand to properties within 300 m of the scheme.

Proposals for access to a new terminal at Heathrow airport would be for the British Airports Authority to bring forward in the first instance.

## Bus Deregulation

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state for each of the areas subject to bus deregulation, what were the estimated bus passenger miles in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1991; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** Estimates of bus passenger miles in each of the areas subject to bus deregulation are not available. However, estimates of local bus passenger journeys are as follows. Overall, the number of local bus passenger journeys outside London fell by an average of 3½ per cent. year between 1984 and 1990-91, in line with long-term trends.

| | *1978* | *1984* | *1990-91* |
|---|---|---|---|
| English metropolitan areas | — | 2,047 | 1,528 |
| English shire counties | — | 1,604 | 1,396 |
| Scotland | — | 669 | 583 |
| Wales | — | 168 | 147 |
| GB outside London | 5,325 | 4,488 | 3,654 |

## Rail Electrification

**Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what levels of investment he anticipates for the electrification of the west coast main line; and when work on this is likely to commence.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail is currently considering the extent and timing of work to update the infrastructure of the line.

## Executive Agencies

**Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what targets he has set for the executive agencies in his Department.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The following key targets for 1992-93 have been set for the six executive agencies in my Department. Additional targets are contained in the agencies' business plans; copies of which will be placed in the Library, except for that of the DVOIT—the Drivers, Vehicles and Operators Information Technology Agency—which is commercial in confidence and will not be published.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's key targets are to make an overall efficiency improvement of 2·5 per cent. as measured by the agency's aggregate efficiency index; deliver 90 per cent. of vocational—non-medical—cases to the customer within 11 working days of receipt; deliver 90 per cent. of provisional driving licence cases within 12 working days of receipt; deliver 90 per cent. of ordinary driving licence—non-medical—cases within 13 working days of receipt; deliver 95 per cent. of changes to vehicle registration documents to the customer within 13 working days of receipt; deliver 95 per cent. of registration documents for new vehicles to the customer within 15 days of receipt; answer 80 per cent. of telephone calls within 30 seconds and callers to be told they are in a queue after 10 seconds; and successfully complete a minimum of 430,000 VED enforcement cases.

The Driving Standards Agency's key targets are to achieve, or better, unit costs of £22·48 for car tests; £52·44 for bus, coach and lorry tests, and £31·72 for motor cycle tests; cover full costs with income from customers; achieve a national average waiting time of six weeks for car tests and four weeks for motor cycle, bus, coach and lorry tests; and answer 90 per cent. of telephone calls to booking offices within 60 seconds.

DVOIT's key targets are to fulfil service level agreements with its customers; cover full costs with income from customers; reduce prices for existing services to current customers by RPI minus 3 per cent.; increase revenue per employee by 10 per cent. a year; achieve an annual rate of return of 6 per cent. on total assets employed.

The Transport Research Laboratory's key targets are 90 per cent. of projects to be completed to customer satisfaction; net revenue per person per year to be a minimum of £40,000; production costs as a percentage of total costs to be greater than 55 per cent.; to recover full economic costs from revenue, while meeting the net control total in supply estimates.

The Vehicle Certification Agency's key targets are to achieve, or better, a unit cost of £94·31; cover full costs with income from customers; technically clear and issue approval certificates within 27 days on average for 90 per cent. of system and component work, and within 63 days on average for 90 per cent. of whole vehicle work.

The Vehicle Inspectorate's trading fund key targets are to make a gross efficiency improvement of 2·5 per cent. as measured by the agency's aggregate cost efficiency index; to break even, taking one year with another; and achieve an annual rate of return of 6 per cent. on total assets employed.

## Dockers (Dismissal)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution the Government are making towards the £1,028,000 compensation payment made by the Port of London authority to the 102 dockers dismissed in 1989.

**Mr. Norris:** None.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department authorised the settlement between the Port of London authority and the 102 dockers dismissed in 1989.

**Mr. Norris:** This matter is within the responsibilities of the authority and no Government consent was needed.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what, to date, are the total legal costs to the Exchequer excluding compensation payments, arising from the dismissal, and subsequent tribunal and appeal hearings, relating to dock workers dismissed by the Port of London authority in 1989; and how much of the total cost is a charge on the Government.

**Mr. Norris:** The only charge to the Exchequer was the cost of these cases to the industrial tribunal and employment appeal tribunal system: I understand this is estimated at around £376,000.

### Tilbury-Gravesend Ferry

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take following the instruction by the Crown Estate Commissioners to White Horse Ferries Ltd. immediately to stop operating the ferry service between Tilbury and Gravesend.

**Mr. Norris:** The arrangements for the continued operation of the ferry are matters for the bodies concerned.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department first learnt of the instruction by the Crown Estate Commissioners to White Horse Ferries Ltd. immediately to stop operating the ferry service between Tilbury and Gravesend.

**Mr. Norris:** This is not a matter for my Department and we had no foreknowledge of the Crown Estate Commissioners' intentions.

### Catalytic Converters

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent communications his Department has had with the European Commission over the extension of the 1 January 1993 deadline for all cars sold after that date to be fitted with catalytic converters.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 5 June 1992]:* The EC Directive, 91/441, does not allow extensions for new cars entering into service from 31 December 1992 to meet standards other than those specified. Neither does this Government want one, since this directive is at the core of our strategy for improving local air quality. We have routinely notified the European Commission of the changes that we are making to our national regulations that will apply this directive on the effective dates. In so doing, we have made separate inquiries of the Commission as to its detailed interpretation of the term "entry into service" so that the United Kingdom's application of the directive will be fully harmonised with those of other member states.

### M40

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the terms of reference for the consultants carrying out the environmental appraisal of the widening of the M40 between the M25 and junction 4.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* The initial stages of the commission require the consultants to assess the need for widening and to report on the feasibility of the possible options for meeting that need, taking into account the engineering, operational and environmental considerations.

**Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated total cost of the widening of the M40 between the M25 and junction 4; what is the estimated cost of *(a)* compensation for loss of property value under the Land Compensation Acts, *(b)* the provision of noise insulation under the noise insulation regulations and *(c)* measures to protect the environment against intrusion of the widened road.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* Consideration of the possible options for widening this length of motorway is not yet complete. The requested estimates are therefore not yet available.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the United Kingdom will respond to the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal for assistance to Afghanistan.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Government will make an immediate pledge of £7·55 million. This sum will be allocated as follows:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, £4 million, to support its programme of assistance to the refugees who are now returning in large numbers.

International Committee of the Red Cross, £1 million, of which £0·5 million has already been provided earlier this year.

United Nations Office of the Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, £0·5 million, for mine clearance.

Afghanaid, a British non-governmental organisation, £1·6 million, for reconstruction and development work, £0·9 million of which has already been provided.

Other NGOs, £0·45 million.

Britain has provided nearly £80 million humanitarian aid since 1980 to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan peoples. We shall continue to monitor needs closely and play our part in Afghanistan's reconstruction.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Sefton Park Palm House

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration his Department is giving to the role of the Sefton Park palm house, in Liverpool, as a tourist attraction.

**Mr. Key:** The development and promotion of individual tourist attractions is a matter for the English tourist board, in conjunction with the regional tourist boards, and the British Tourist Authority.

### Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* None.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what has been the total cost so far of the market-testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* As this is a newly formed Department, no costs have yet been incurred on the market-testing initiative.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *102*.

## WALES

### Youth Training Scheme

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people in Wales have been on weekly bridging allowances awaiting YTS placements in the last three years.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The number of young people in Wales in receipt of bridging allowances is provided on a monthly basis from January 1989 to December 1991 in the table.

*Numbers in receipt of bridging allowances (Wales)*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| *1989* | |
| January | 767 |
| February | 832 |
| March | 774 |
| April | 671 |
| May | 569 |
| June | 583 |
| July | 621 |
| August | 630 |
| September | 514 |
| October | 526 |
| November | 476 |
| December | 460 |
| *1990* | |
| January | 563 |
| February | 763 |
| March | 704 |
| April | 585 |
| May | 526 |
| June | 577 |
| July | 599 |
| August | 585 |
| September | 591 |
| October | 575 |
| November | 582 |
| December | 550 |
| *1991* | |
| January | 656 |
| February | 919 |
| March | 977 |
| April | 890 |
| May | 804 |
| June | 703 |
| July | 724 |
| August | 747 |
| September | 613 |
| October | 562 |
| November | 564 |
| December | 492 |

### Rural Initiative

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown of the spending so far on his rural initiative.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Full expenditure details for work undertaken in 1991-92 under the rural initiative are not yet available. Allocations for 1991-92 under the rural initiative comprised: an increase of £6 million to £32 million in Housing for Wales' support for housing in rural areas; an increase in provision from £1 million to £3 million in reserve to assist local authorities with rural housing, supplemented by an additional in-year allocation of £4·5 million.

These allocations, together with core and other allocations to local authorities will mean that total investment in rural housing is expected to be over £85 million.

In addition to the £20 million Welsh Development Agency expenditure in support of mainstream activities in rural areas, a further £5 million was allocated to the agency for specific measures in rural areas and related core activities.

Funding totalled £1·2 million under the projects of regional or national importance—PRNI—scheme, for leisure and sports centre development at Rhayader and Llandrindod Wells; and £5 million was allocated to support projects put forward by local authorities likely to be of most benefit to rural communities.

Allocations for 1992-93 under the initiative are £35 million for Housing for Wales for rural housing; £4 million for local authorities from the rural housing reserve; £6 million for local authorities from other central reserves which will benefit rural areas. This, together with the £4 million for local authority rural housing and £2 million of the Housing for Wales provision, makes up the £12 million on top of core allocations announced by the Secretary of State in December 1991.

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These allocations, together with core allocations to local authorities are expected to bring total investment in rural housing to over £112 million.

There has been an increase of £3 million in funding of the Countryside Council for Wales, to £17 million. Some £0·5 million of this has been provided to develop a new pilot scheme, "Tir Cymen", for management of rural landscapes and habitats.

Some £400,000 has been directed by the Wales tourist board to new rural tourism marketing and project programmes.

The Welsh Development Agency's expenditure in rural areas will increase by £7·5 million to £32·5 million.

There will also be a £6 million programme of local authority capital projects designed specifically for the benefit of rural communities.

This package is in addition to the extra £2·2 million provision for the Development Board for Rural Wales, announced in December 1991; and to the extra £1·4 million for the three Welsh national parks, also announced in December 1991.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what steps he has taken to ensure that district and borough councils in Wales received sufficient cash from central Government to enable them to meet their responsibilities for refuse disposal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he has taken to ensure that Welsh district and borough councils received sufficient cash from central Government to enable them to meet their responsibilities concerning economic development; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps he has taken to ensure that Welsh district and borough councils received sufficient central Government cash to enable them to meet their responsibilities concerning environmental health; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The local government finance settlement for 1992-93, approved by the House on 12 February, enables local authorities in Wales to maintain and develop services for which they are responsible to an acceptable standard.

## Nurses' Grading

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurse clinical grading appeals are outstanding in each health authority in Wales; and what percentage this is of the total number of appeals submitted in each county in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The information requested on outstanding appeals is as shown in the table:

| *Health authority* | *Appeals at employing authority level* | | *Appeals at all-Wales level* | | *Appeals at national level* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number outstanding* | *Percentage of total appeals submitted* | *Number outstanding* | *Percentage of total appeals submitted* | *Number outstanding* | *Percentage of total appeals submitted* |
| Clwyd | 0 | | 99 | 62 | 12 | 100 |
| East Dyfed | 42 | 7 | 79 | 72 | 11 | 92 |
| Gwent | 5 | — | 294 | 71 | 26 | 96 |
| Gwynedd | 0 | — | 134 | 42 | 47 | 100 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 510 | 38 | 208 | 83 | 13 | 81 |
| Pembrokeshire | 0 | — | 56 | 100 | 0 | — |
| Powys | 0 | — | 151 | 70 | 1 | 20 |
| South Glamorgan | 0 | — | 252 | 86 | 20 | 100 |
| West Glamorgan | 0 | — | 86 | 64 | 29 | 100 |
| Wales | 557 | 9 | 1,359 | 70 | 159 | 95 |

## House Repair Grants

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will up-date by the appropriate percentage the level of those means-tested house repair grants based on 1991 benefit rates; and make equivalent adjustment to renovation and disabled facilities grants.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The uprating of allowances and premiums for house renovation grants is being considered along with other adjustments to the test of resources following the recent review of the grant system. We expect to make a further announcement shortly.

## Brymbo Site

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in securing the Brymbo steelworks site; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** This site is still in the ownership of United Engineering Steels Ltd. Its future is under active consideration.

## A-level and GCSE

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision he envisages of A-level and GCSE courses in Wrexham following the termination of their provision at the North East Wales institute.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The provision of A-level and GCSE courses in schools and further education colleges is the responsibility of the local education authority. As from 1 April 1993 a new independent further education sector will be established, comprising further education colleges, tertiary colleges and sixth form colleges. The Further Education Funding Council for Wales will be responsible for securing the provision of adequate facilities for post-16 education in the new sector, including the provision of A-level and GCSE courses. Clwyd LEA will retain responsibility for the provision of A-level and GCSE courses in its schools.

## Forensic Psychiatric Service

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money is being made available to the forensic psychiatric service in Wales to fund the capital costs of developing medium secure accommodation and to support its essential manning costs in the initial period until its development has been secured.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** In 1991-92, the Welsh Office fully funded the capital and revenue costs of developing the Caswell clinic at Glanrhyd hospital, Bridgend. Revenue support will continue to be available in 1992-93 to help the clinic move to a contractual relationship with purchasing health authorities.

### Community Councils

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his proposals for the role of community councils following the reorganisation of local government in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am publishing today a consultation paper on the future role of community and town councils under the unitary authority structure which I will be putting in place. My earlier statements to the House have made clear the importance I attach to the work of these councils and the advantages I see in enhancing their representational role as the voice of their communities. My consultation paper invites views on how this may be achieved.

The consultation paper will be circulated widely. I am inviting responses by 30 September 1992, and I propose to take account of the comments received in preparing the White Paper which I shall be publishing later this year.

### Health and Social Care Research

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has received to the consultative document "Health and Social Care Research, Wales".

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** We have received 33 responses from a range of research institutions and other interested bodies. The majority were broadly in favour of the approach recommended in the document, which was to maintain the current arrangements for supporting health and social care research and development in Wales, within the context of a more clearly defined strategy and closer co-ordination at all levels. While some respondents called for a separate Welsh research and development function, most favoured continued participation in the joint England and Wales programme although all wished Welsh interests to be clearly and properly represented. We intend therefore to proceed in line with the recommendations made in the consultative document, including the drawing up of a formal agrement between the Welsh Office and the Department of Health regarding activity under the joint programme. The NHS Wales research and development strategy which is being developed during this year will be a core element of the overall strategy for health and social care research in Wales.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Sea Fish Conservation

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations have taken place with the fish producers organisations in Northern Ireland in relation to the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill.

**Mr. Hanley:** The Northern Ireland fishing industry has been included in the consultation on the implementation of a package of measures which includes effort control, and its views will be considered carefully. The purpose of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Bill is to provide the necessary enabling powers for the effort control element of the package.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average time taken to process an application form for disability living allowance.

**Mr. Hanley:** Social security operational matters are the responsibility of the chief executive of the Social Security Agency. He will write to the hon. Gentleman and copies of his reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Mates:** At 1 January 1992 there were 1,262 staff in the Northern Ireland civil service—4·3 per cent. of the service—who reported themselves as having a disability. Of these, 431—1·5 per cent. of the service—were, or had been, registered as disabled. In addition, 45 registered disabled poeple are working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme.

The number and percentage of staff with disabilities in each grade 1 to 7 were:

| *Grade* | *Number who reported a disability (SRD)* | *Percentage SRD* | *Number registered as disabled (RD)* | *Percentage RD* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | — | — | — | — |
| 2 | — | — | — | — |
| 3 | 1 | 2·4 | 1 | 2·4 |
| 4 | — | — | — | — |
| 5 | 5 | 2·6 | — | — |
| 6 | 13 | 3·7 | 3 | 0·9 |
| 7 | 22 | 2·6 | 3 | 0·4 |

### NHS Expenditure

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the expenditure per head in Northern Ireland of *(a)* hospital and community health services, *(b)* general practitioner services, excluding the cost of prescriptions, *(c)* dental services, gross and net of charges and *(d)* general practitioner-prescribed prescriptions, in 1991-92.

**Mr. Hanley:** The information requested will not be available until 31 August 1992.

## ENVIRONMENT

### City Challenge

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment When he intends to make an announcement on the results of the city challenge; how many local authorities will receive such funding; and what is the planned total amount over the next five years.

**Mr. Redwood:** The results of the second round of the city challenge competition will be announced on 16 July 1992. The planned total amount for the 20 authorities in the second round over the next five years is £750 million.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences for the storage of radioactive waste have been issued since 1979 for the Blaenau Gwent constituency under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 and its successor Acts.

**Mr. Maclean:** There are currently no authorisations under section 7(1) of the Act in force for the accumulation of radioactive waste at premises in Blaenau Gwent. A study of available records has not revealed that any authorisations have been issued since 1979 in respect of premises in this district.

### Organotin Products

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect *(a)* the EC marketing and use directive and *(b)* the treaties and protocols signed at the United Nations conference on environment and development will have on the use of all organotin products.

**Mr. Maclean:** (a) The eighth amendment to the EC marketing and use directive prohibits the use of organotin-based antifouling products on boats less than 25 m and on aquaculture equipment. It exends to other member states controls which have operated in the United Kingdom since 1987. The directive also prohibits the use of organotins for treatment of industrial waters and this provision was implemented in the United Kingdom in February 1992. This use has not been identified in the United Kingdom, but has caused environmental problems in other member states.

(b) UNCED "Agenda 21", although not a binding convention, sets out a broad programme for improvement of the oceans including a reference to reducing pollution caused by organotin compounds used in antifouling paints. This is in line with a resolution adopted in 1990 by the International Maritime Organisation which aims to reduce the impact of the use of such paints on large vessels and to encourage the development of environmentally safe substitutes.

### Rent Arrears

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide, in relation to rent arrears for each metropolitan borough and district council in England and Wales for 1987-88 and each succeeding year for which the information is available, *(a)* the number of tenants in rent arrears and this figure as a percentage of all local authority tenants, *(b)* the average and total amounts due and *(c)* the total amount as a percentage of local authorities' revenue from rents.

**Mr. Baldry:** I have today placed in the Library a table showing the total amount of rent arrears due to each local authority in England, at the end of financial years 1987-88 to 1990-91 inclusive, and the percentage this represents of total rent due. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publication "Housing Rents Statistics at April" contains information about the number of tenants in arrears with rents, rates and other charges in England and Wales; copies are available in the Library. For information on total rent arrears in Wales, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

### Methane

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from how many active sites in England and Wales the estimate of methane emissions from landfills in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" No. 14 is derived; how many other landfills in England and Wales are estimated to emit methane; and what is their total annual contribution.

**Mr. Maclean:** The landfill gas methane emissions estimate in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" No. 14 is derived from data on 453 sites in England and Wales.

There are many additional landfill sites in which methane may be generated to some extent, but biological conditions in these sites are much less favourable for methane generation and it is thought unlikely that they constitute a significant additional source.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at the sites where gas control and capture measures are in place, what are the realistic figures from field studies of *(a)* the efficiency of capture and *(b)* the escape of methane through leaky pipeworks, valves and burners.

**Mr. Maclean:** Field studies suggest that methane capture efficiencies of between 50 and 90 per cent. are achieved by landfill gas control and capture measures. The escape of methane from leaky pipe work, valves and burners is likely to be negligible.

### Urban Programme

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what eligibility criteria are applied to select local authorities for urban programme status;

(2) if he will make a statement on the reasons for his decision not to confer urban programme status on Pendle.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** In 1986, urban programme resources were concentrated on 57 local authority areas which had the greatest needs in terms of scale and intensity of deprivation as measured mainly by unemployment and 1981 census data. At that time, Pendle did not show either the scale or intensity of deprivation to justify urban programme status. The criteria for assessing urban needs will be reviewed towards the end of the year in the light of data derived from the 1991 census.

### Sefton Park Palm House

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the future of Liverpool's Sefton Park palm house; what grants are available for its renewal; and what consideration his Department and the Merseyside development corporation have given to its role in developing environmental awareness.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** In the last 12 months the Department has received very few representations on Sefton Park palm house.

Liverpool city council is exploring all avenues for the eligibility of grants for the restoration of Sefton Park palm house, including possible grants from English Heritage or the urban programme.

The original application by Liverpool city council envisaged a restored palm house as an integral part of a wider concept for a Victorian heritage trail in south Liverpool. We will give careful consideration to proposals that meet these wider aims and objectives of environmental awareness and are consistent with the relevant grant regimes.

Although Liverpool city council has held discussions with Merseyside development corporation, the palm house lies outside MDC's designated area and due to other priorities the corporation is unable to consider support.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in processing the application made to his Department by Liverpool city council in connection with Liverpool palm house; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The application has been deferred, pending the outcome of a study being undertaken by English Heritage. When this is known Liverpool city council will re-assess its proposals before resubmitting them to my Department.

### Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Barnsley qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income suport, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,492 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Leyton qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disablilty working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 238 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in North Warwickshire qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,066 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Burnley are estimated to qualify for grant aid under the home efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved in Burnley under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 245 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Coventry, North-East qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under this scheme since 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,066 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Lewisham, Deptford, qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her

spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 106 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the Manchester, Wythenshawe constituency qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the right hon. Member's constituency, 986 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

### Business Rate

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the methods of business rate evaluation of small businesses which operate for only part of the year.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** No. Rents for property, which are the basis for rateable value assessments, take into account local seasonal use, which is therefore already reflected in annual rates bills.

### Council Tax

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to publish the regulations for the procedure for an appeal against the valuation of a property for the purpose of the council tax.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** I expect to issue draft regulations for consultation later this month.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make the banded valuations for the purposes of the council tax the basis for assessment of water charges, where *(a)* new properties are being built and *(b)* properties were incorrectly valued in the last available valuation under the rating system.

**Mr. Maclean:** It is for individual water companies to decide on their preferred future system of charging for their services, subject to the overriding requirement, contained in their licence of appointment, that their charges do not show undue preference to, or unduly discriminate against, any class of customers or potential customers. The Director General of Water Services has recently issued guidance to the companies on the suitability of the available alternatives.

### Energy Conservation

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce grants for energy conservation in the domestic sector, including grants for cavity wall insulation.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The Department provides grants to householders on low incomes for energy efficiency measures through the home energy efficiency scheme. Finance to encourage energy efficiency measures in housing is also made available through house renovation grants and minor works assistance, local authorities' council housing repair and improvement programmes, the green house demonstration programme and estates action.

The Energy Savings Trust announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 13 May, *Official Report*, at column *136*, is also expected to make grants available to improve energy efficiency.

### Management Agreements

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to revise his Department's circular 3/84 on financial guidelines for management agreements.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* We will make such revisions as are necessary following the forthcoming review of the financial guidelines.

## SCOTLAND

### Factor 8

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the operation of the Medicines Act (Exemptions from Licences) (Importation) Order 1984—SI, 1984, No. 673—in relation to named patient arrangements for the supply of unlicensed factor 8 preparations and other unlicensed pharmaceutical products.

**Mr. Stewart:** I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 1 July 1992.

Responsibility for the operation of the Medicines Act (Exemptions from Licences) (Importation) Order 1984 is a matter for the Medicines Control Agency.

### Immunologists

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consultant immunologists there are in each Scottish health board area.

**Mr. Stewart:** The information collected centrally records only the main specialty of a doctor and shows that there were no consultant immunologists employed in the NHS in Scotland at 30 September 1991, the latest date for

which information is available. No information is available centrally on the number of doctors who work in immunology and for whom this specialty constitutes an area of special interest.

## NHS Staff

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for 1988, 1989 and 1990 *(a)* the number of whole-time equivalent national health service staff employed on the terms and conditions of the national health service administrative and clerical staffs Whitley council in Scotland, *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalent national health service general and senior managers and *(c)* the number of health staff employed at the Scottish Home and Health Department.

**Mr. Stewart:** The information requested is as follows:

*(a) National Health Service administrative and clerical staff (whole-time equivalent) at 30 September employed under Whitley Council terms and conditions (1, 2)*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 14,713·2 |
| 1989 | 15,111·9 |
| 1990 | 15,577·8 |

*(b) NHS general and senior managers (whole time equivalent) at 30 September*

| | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|
| General managers | 62·0 | 62·0 | 65·0 |
| Senior managers(3) | 28·0 | 49·0 | 281·0 |

*(c) Staff employed in the Scottish Home and Health Department on health matters at 1 April*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 355 |
| 1989 | 356 |
| 1990 | 379 |

## Hospital Directors

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the salaries and other benefits for each executive and non-executive director of the South Ayrshire district general hospital and the Foresterhill hospital.

**Mr. Stewart:** The chairman of the South Ayrshire NHS trust is paid £17,145 per annum and the chairman of the Aberdeen Royal Hospitals trust £19,285 per annum. Non-executive directors are paid £5,000 per annum. The chairman and non-executive directors of both trusts also qualify for travelling and other allowances identical to those for members of health boards. Salaries and other benefits for executive directors are the responsibility of the trusts themselves.

## Departmental Expenses

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost of official *(a)* hospitality and functions, *(b)* visits outwith Scotland and *(c)* gifts, etc. attributable to the Scottish Office in each year since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 11 June 1992]:* The information requested is as follows:

*(a) Hospitality and Functions*

| Year | Amount spent on hospitality (£) |
|---|---|
| 1980-81 | 19,427 |
| 1981-82 | 20,762 |
| 1982-83 | 31,588 |
| 1983-84 | 26,287 |
| 1984-85 | 27,301 |
| 1985-86 | 35,815 |
| 1986-87 | 38,315 |
| 1987-88 | 41,983 |
| 1988-89 | 42,987 |
| 1989-90 | 60,173 |
| 1990-91 | 65,123 |
| 1991-92 | 62,800 |

*(b) Visits outwith Scotland*

Scottish Office Ministers and officials incur travel and subsistence costs on journeys outwith Scotland, particularly to England, in the normal course of duties and functions placed on them by Parliament. It is not possible to identify those costs separately from the total Scottish Office travel and subsistence expenditure, which was £4,972 million in 1991-92.

*(c) Gifts etc.*

Records in relation to gifts attributable to the Scottish Office go back only to 1988-89. The cost of gifts incurred by the Scottish Office since then are:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 109 |
| 1989-90 | 403 |
| 1990-91 | 330 |
| 1991-92 | 450 |

## Superannuation Division

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the timetable for the establishment of the Scottish Office superannuation division as a "next steps" agency; and whether both the administration and the policy side of the division will be incorporated within it;

(2) if he will place in the Library the framework document for the establishment of the Scottish Office superannuation division as a "next steps" agency;

(3) if he will make a statement on his reasons for setting up the Scottish Office superannuation division as a "next steps" agency; what measures he will take to protect the standards of service provided by the superannuation division; and what will be the performance criteria for the agency.

**Mr. Stewart** *[holding answer 30 June 1992]:* The Government's declared policy under its "next steps" programme is that units within government carrying out executive functions should be established as agencies operating within frameworks which enable them to improve their performance. Key aims of the programme are to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the agencies and the standard of services which they provide.

The Secretary of State announced on 6 March, *Official Report*, column *335*, that the Scottish Office superannuation division is to be established as an agency by the autumn. A firm date will be announced as soon as possible. The new agency will assume all the functions undertaken at present by the superannuation division, including advising Ministers on policy issues. The framework document under which the agency will operate will include a clear statement of its functions and responsibilites. It will

be published on the launch of the agency and a copy will be placed in the Library. Performance criteria and key performance targets will also be published at that time.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Tibet

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will use the opportunity of the British presidency of the EC to co-ordinate a community response to the claims of Tibet to self-determination.

**The Prime Minister:** No state recognises Tibet as independent. Successive British Governments have, however, consistently regarded Tibet as autonomous, while recognising the special position of the Chinese there. We have urged the Chinese authorities to allow that autonomy. During our presidency we shall continue to take up with the Chinese authorities human rights abuses both in Tibet and in China.

### Earth Summit

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what progress has been made in establishing the United Kingdom national consultation committee on sustainable development as agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**The Prime Minister:** The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development did not agree to set up a United Kingdom national consultation committee on sustainable development. UNCED did agree to recommend that the United Nations General Assembly set up, within the UN system, a Commission for Sustainable Development. The United Kingdom welcomed this, and we have undertaken to report regularly to the commission on our own progress towards sustainable development. In preparing those reports, we shall want to consult fully with interested people and organisations.

### War Crimes

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister what current consideration Her Majesty's Government are giving to evidence of atrocities at the Sylt camp on Alderney and elsewhere in the Channel islands during the second world war.

**The Prime Minister:** The War Crimes Act 1991 gives United Kingdom courts jurisdiction over acts of murder, manslaughter or culpable homicide committed as violations of the laws and customs of war in territory which was part of Germany or under German occupation during the second world war by people who are now British citizens or resident in the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man or any of the Channel islands, but who did not have British nationality at the material time.

There is no reason to believe that anyone responsible for atrocities/war crimes committed in the Channel islands is in the United Kingdom.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Environment

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 18 June from the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, *Official Report*, column *664*, when he expects to receive a response from the Group of Seven colleagues to his eight-point plan relating to global forecasting; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** I wrote to G7 leaders proposing that they should commit themselves to action to follow up the agreements reached at the Earth summit. One of my specific proposals was that we should each commit ourselves to preparing and publishing national plans for action on biological diversity.

I hope we shall discuss these matters at the forthcoming summit in Munich.

## HEALTH

### Baby Food

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the United Kingdom voluntary code on direct advertising of infant formula to parents; and if she will consider including within the code formulae which are manufactured for older babies.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The United Kingdom delegation was at the forefront of ensuring that the principles of the World Health Organisation international code of marketing of breast-milk substitutes—the WHO code—were incorporated into the EC directive—91/321/EEC—on infant formulae and follow-on formulae agreed in May 1991. National legislation to implement the directive is in preparation and will require a review of the voluntary UK code, including the products that are covered. The Government are committed to ensuring that the existing restrictions on marketing and advertising are, at least, maintained.

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Finnish baby milk manufacturer Young Nutrition about the application of the United Kingdom voluntary code on direct advertising of infant formulae to parents.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** Discussions between representatives from Young Nutrition and officials about the operation of the code of practice for the marketing of infant formulae in the United Kingdom took place before the company launched its products in the UK. As a result, Young Nutrition joined the Infant and Dietetic Foods Association of the Food and Drink Federation and has representation on the code monitoring committee that oversees compliance with the code in the UK.

### Haemophilia

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received from the United Kingdom Regional Haemophilia Centre directors' committee about the licensing of pharmaceutical products

used in the treatment of people with haemophilia; if she will make it her policy that all people with haemophilia A should be treated with licensed monoclonal high purity products; and if she will make central funds available for this purpose;

(2) if she will make it her policy not to allow unlicensed factor 8 products for the treatment of haemophilia to be imported or used within the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have received no such representations from the United Kingdom Regional Haemophilia Centre Directors' Committee. It is normal practice in the United Kingdom for clinicians to use licensed medicinal products. It is also possible for clinicians, under sections 9 and 13 of the Medicines Act, to prescribe an unlicensed product on a "named patient" basis.

It is for clinicians to decide the most appropriate product indicated for the treatment of each individual patient.

## Orthodontic Treatment

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total numbers, the total cost and the average cost of a chargeable course of orthodontic treatment in the financial years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 in each health region and England as a whole.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Over 95 per cent. of orthodontic treatment is given to patients under 18 years of age and even some adult orthodontic treatment is likely to be on patients who are also charge-exempt. The amount of chargeable orthodontic treatment is, therefore, very small.

## NHS Staff

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for 1988 and 1989 *(a)* the number of whole-time equivalent national health service staff employed on the terms and conditions of the national health service administrative and clerical staffs Whitley council in England, *(b)* the number of whole-time equivalent national health service general and senior managers and *(c)* the number of staff employed at her Department.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** At 30 September 1988 and 1989 the numbers of whole-time equivalent administrative and clerical staff employed in the national health service in England were 114,720 and 116,840 respectively. Corresponding figures for general and senior managers are 1,240 and 4,610. It is not possible to present accurate staffing figures for the Department of Health before 1 January 1989 following its separation from the Department of Social Security in October 1988. Figures for permanent staff in post in 1989 were 8,794 at 1 January and 8,712 at 1 October—part-time staff being counted as half units.

## Waiting Lists

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each region, and nationally the numbers on the waiting lists as at April and October 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department's statistical bulletins are published every six months. These include the total number of people waiting for hospital treatment by region and nationally. The most recent information for the six months to 30 September 1991 was published on 4 June. For provisional figures for the year to March 1992, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 12 May at columns *489-92*. These show that between 31 March 1990 and 31 March 1992 the total number of patients waiting fell by over 43,000 or 4·5 per cent.

## Obsessive Compulsions

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what treatment is now available under the national health service for obsessive compulsion disorder sufferers; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** National health service treatment for obsessive compulsive disorder sufferers is a matter for the clinical judgment of the responsible health professional. Current approaches include the use of behaviour therapy and anti-depressant medication.

## Community Care

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions she proposes to make to establish the amount of social security transfer to local authorities for community care that will be made available from April 1993 onwards following the disbanding of the Algebra group.

**Mr. Yeo:** The social security transfer will be calculated in accordance with the formula, and the factors affecting it, which were the subject of the completed discussions in the so-called "Algebra group". The transfer will be announced in the context of this year's local authority expenditure settlement. It will be transparent, separately identifiable and local authorities and others with an interest will be able to see how the calculations were done.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of financial considerations on the ability of local authorities to implement the Children Act 1989 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

**Mr. Yeo:** Personal social services—PSS—standard spending for 1992-93 has been set at £4,850 million, an increase of 7·7 per cent.—3·1 per cent. in real terms—over 1991-92 standard spending, and 6 per cent. higher than 1991-92 budgets. Over the two years 1990-91 to 1992-93, PSS standard spending will have increased by nearly one third—19 per cent. in real terms. The settlement provides a realistic increase in resources for PSS taking account of falling inflation, and allows for the first full year costs of implementing the Children Act, phase 2 of community care, new and increased specific grants, inflation and demography. PSS expenditure has increased by 67 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what extra funds she will grant to health authorities in order that community health services, including district nurses, collaborate with local authorities in implementing care in the community.

**Mr. Yeo:** District health authorities are working with social services departments to develop strategies for the

provision of community health services. Health authorities are already funded for their responsibilities, including preparation for implementing "Caring for People" in April 1993. Resources for 1993-94 will be determined in the public expenditure survey in the usual way. Regional health authorities, when allocating these resources to districts and GP fund holders, will take account of special needs resulting from agreed plans for collaboration between national health service and local authority staff.

## NHS Estates

**Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the plans of the National Health Service Estates executive agency.

**Mr. Sackville:** I am pleased to report that National Health Service Estates has had a successful first year as an executive agency of this Department. I have agreed the agency's 1992-93 three-year corporate plan, and annual business plan.

Objectives/key tasks for the agency for 1992-93 are:

1. To keep within agreed running cost/cash limits and recover budgeted income flow by increasing efficiency, reducing costs and improving revenues saving 4 per cent. on the agency's 1992-93 running cost allocation, producing 100 per cent. of services within time and cost agreed and assessing requirements for eventual move to the most suitable financial regime.
2. To facilitate the release of capital and revenue resources for improved health care through increasing uptake by NHS customers of agency asset management, estate utilisation, option appraisal and design products. Target for 1992-93 —£250-£500 million.
3. In the light of the health reforms, to agree with existing and new customers their changing requirements for products and services while identifying a further 30 per cent. of area 3 services for untying.
4. Manage the agency's relocation to Leeds by March 1993 maintaining service levels, credibility and morale.
5. To facilitate improved productivity by reviewing pay/performance and staff management requirements making recommendations by March 1993.
6. To improve product quality by implementing a programme to achieve BS 5750 quality assurance accreditation in 1993-94.

## Health Service Commissioner

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the annual report of the Health Service Commissioner for 1991-92.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** The Health Service Commissioner has, as in previous years, made a report on the performance of his functions in England, Scotland and Wales. My right hon. Friends, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Wales and I presented the report to the House on 1 July. It was published today—HC82—and copies have been placed in the Library. Copies are also available from the Vote Office.

## Pen Injection Systems

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made in her Department's review about the provision of needles for pen injection systems for diabetics through general practitioner prescription; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Discussions are continuing with suppliers about the price and technical specification of pen injection systems and their needles. When these discussions have reached a satisfactory conclusion, we aim to make pens and needles prescribable at the earliest opportunity.

## Clinical Grading

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her best estimate of the time it will take to resolve outstanding clinical grading by nurses *(a)* in England, *(b)* in Wales and *(c)* in Scotland, (i) at the current rate of progress and (ii) given the current proposals for speeding up the process.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) on 30 June at columns *462-63*.

## Foetal Parts

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement regarding the uses to which foetal parts from aborted pre-born babies are put when they are not incinerated.

**Mr. Sackville:** A code of practice on the use of foetal tissue is contained in the Polkinghorne report on the review of the guidance on the research use of foetal and foetal material, a copy of which is in the Library. Health authorities and places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 have been asked to ensure that the code of practice is fully adhered to.

## Domestic Fires

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths she estimates could be avoided each year if smoke alarms were installed in all homes.

**Mr. Baldry:** I have been asked to reply.

Precise estimates are difficult to make. If all homes were fitted with correctly sited and properly maintained smoke detectors, between 100 and 150 lives might be saved each year in fires in the United Kingdom.

# DEFENCE

## Submarines

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many fuel core assemblies from nuclear-powered submarines are being kept at Sellafield; and what are his plans for reprocessing or providing for long-term storage of this material.

**Mr. Aitken:** Currently some 36 nuclear submarine used fuel cores are stored at BNFL Sellafield. No decision has yet been taken on whether to reprocess this used fuel which will continue to be held in safe storage.

## Disabled Employees

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are registered disabled people.

**Mr. Aitken:** The MOD employs 1,164 registered disabled staff which represents 0·9 per cent. of the total work force. At present, none of our registered disabled staff is employed in grades 1 to 7.

### Frigates

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the Royal Navy's future frigate combat management system.

**Mr. Aitken:** Following competition, contracts were placed with three companies, Dowty Sema, Ferranti Naval Systems and Thomson CSF in February 1992 for feasibility studies into the combat management system for the future frigate. These are due to compete in 1993. In addition, discussions are being conducted with the French to examine the possibilities for collaboration with France on the future frigate, including the combat management system.

### Surface-to-Air Missile

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the result of the competition for the medium-range surface-to-air missile.

**Mr. Aitken:** The evaluation of tenders is currently under way. Consideration of procurement options following the completion of the evaluation will need to be carried out in the context of United Kingdom air defence requirements as a whole. We hope to announce a decision in the first half of 1993.

### Defence Research Agency

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what targets have been set for the Defence Research Agency in 1992-93.

**Mr. Aitken:** The targets recently set for the Defence Research Agency in 1992-93 and subsequent years are as follows:

*(a)* To keep within budget for 1992-93 and subsequently to meet profit and cash targets as a trading fund;

*(b)* To achieve overall time utilisation of 40 per cent. and utilisation of direct booking staff of 68 per cent. in 1992-93 and to improve these to 48 and 70 per cent. respectively by 1994-95;

*(c)* To reduce administrative and general overhead (AGO) to 25 per cent. of direct costs in 1993-94 and to reduce this progressively to 15 per cent. in 1996-97;

*(d)* To increase the percentage of DRA's turnover formally subject to market testing to at least 50 per cent. by 1996-97. Activities to the value of £25 million to be market-tested in 1992-93;

*(e)* To achieve 60 per cent. of milestones within one month of the due date in 1992-93 and to improve this by 5 per cent. per annum for four years;

*(f)* To achieve an improvement in quality of service in 1992-93 as measured by the management parameters in the customer satisfaction survey as compared with overall satisfaction—81 per cent. of average level of all parameters in 1992-93;

*(g)* By 31 October 1992, to demonstrate the DRA's ability to operate as a trading fund, and

*(h)* By 31 March 1993, to develop a definitive programme for asset rationalisation against which targets will be set in future years.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Utility Charges

**Mr. Ward:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to require the public utilities to change their level of standing charges to help low users of their services.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The nature and level of charges for services and supplies by the utilities are matters for the companies, subject to the conditions in their licences. Enforcement of licence conditions, which can include price controls, is a matter for the utility regulators, who also have responsibility and powers to protect the interests of customers. The Government have no powers to vary directly the type of level of charges, and no plans to take such powers.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Maurice Bland

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the application by Maurice Bland for parole, and consider what rehabilitation plans will be appropriate.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Mr. Bland is serving a discretionary life sentence. His case has been reviewed seven times by the Parole Board—most recently in December 1990, but the board has not yet recommended that Mr. Bland is safe to release. My right hon. and learned Friend has no power to release a life sentence prisoner without a positive Parole Board recommendation.

The next review of Mr. Bland's case by the Parole Board will take place under new arrangements contained in section 34 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which comes into force from 1 October this year. Under these new arrangements, responsibility for release decisions will rest solely with the Parole Board. In the meantime, prison staff continue to work with Mr. Bland in tackling his problems.

### Passports

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the adult population hold a British passport.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This has been passed to the chief executive of the Passport Agency who will reply shortly. A copy of his reply will be placed in the Library.

### Racial Crimes

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the operation of the police's Thamesmead race unit in its activities against racial harassment; if he will indicate by ethnic group the numbers arrested and the number of victims; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that two police constables employed on Plumstead police division, which includes the Thamesmead area, are dedicated to the investigation of racial incidents. These officers maintain close liaison with the London borough of Greenwich, and with the Greenwich action committee against racial attacks.

A total of 203 substantiated complaints of racially motivated crime in 1991 were made to Plumstead division, of which 77—40 per cent.—were solved by these two officers.

Of the 203 victims, 104 were Asian, 49 white, and 44 Afro-Caribbean and six victims were from other ethnic groups. Forty-one white and eight Afro-Caribbean suspected were arrested.

I commend the work of these officers. The level of racially motivated crimes which have been cleared up on the division is good evidence of this initiative's success in tackling racially motivated crime.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he has not yet responded to the letter to him dated 21 May from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mrs. S. Reategin, following the forwarding to him of relevant correspondence by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary last April.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend wrote to the right hon. Member on 29 June.

### Crime Statistics

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the levels of robbery, burglary and theft from a vehicle crimes in the Coventry, North-East constituency for the most recent available year; and what is the percentage change for each category from the previous year.

**Mr. Jack:** The information requested is not collected centrally. However, the information for the Coventry division as a whole is published in the annual report of the chief constable of the West Midlands police.

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken to consider applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and what was the comparable time taken five years ago.

**Mr. Jack:** The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board does not record centrally the average time taken to process applications. However, percentages of cases completed within certain periods are shown in the board's annual reports, copies of which are held in the Library.

### Local Government Act 1966

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to amend section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 in order to widen its scope.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We accept the need to bring forward legislation on this point when there is a suitable opportunity.

### Wrongful Conviction

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many allegations of wrongful conviction upon indictment being considered by C3 division of the Home Office with a view to a possible reference to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 have been outstanding for more than six months.

**Mr. Jack:** Forty-two.

### Fire Brigade Inspectors

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to publicise the results of annual brigade inspections carried out by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Applying the principles of the citizens charter, we will in future be publishing all reports of this kind. I have decided that reports of all inspections undertaken since the beginning of this year will be published.

I believe that this will be a small but significant step in increasing the accountability of the fire service to the general public for the quality of the service which it provides. I would welcome any public response to points made in the inspectors' reports, as well as any comments that local authorities might choose to make. The first of these reports covering the inspection of the West Sussex fire brigade has been published today, and copies have been placed in the Library of both Houses.

### Crime

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to making improvements to the information available about crime, including more frequent publication of the "British Crime Survey"; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** The Government take seriously their responsibility to ensure that Parliament and the public are provided with the best available information about crime. We have considered how the collection, analysis and dissemination of this information can be improved.

At present, published recorded crime figures are based on the summaries sent to the Home Office of the number of offences recorded by the 43 police forces in England and Wales. Recorded offences include indictable/triable either way offences and certain summary offences.

That information is collated by Home Office statisticians and published in summary form each quarter in Home Office statistical bulletins, and only annually with supporting analysis in the series of Command Papers, "Criminal Statistics in England and Wales."

The statistics of offences recorded by the police provided a measure of the amount of crime with which they are faced. But many offences go unrecorded.

A more complete picture of crime is provided by the British crime survey, in which a large sample of the public is interviewed about their experience of crime in the previous year. We think it right that this valuable work be made available more regularly and we propose, therefore, that the British crime survey be published at two-yearly intervals in the future.

This will give better information about trends, against which to interpret figures of recorded crime. The results of a further sweep of the British crime survey now taking place, relating to the amount of crime experienced in 1991, will be published in the autumn.

We also believe that the recorded crime statistics should be accompanied by fuller analysis of their significance. To give time for this to be done, the present quarterly summary reporting cycle will be replaced by statistics accompanied by analysis on a six-monthly publication cycle.

This will provide more, not less, information. It should go some way to reduce the considerable and untoward fear of crime among the public generated by the current quarterly publications which was highlighted by the working group on the fear of crime, chaired by Mr. Michael Grade, in December 1989.

We will publish the first bulletin on the six-monthly publication cycle, covering the statistics of notifiable offences recorded by the police in the period July 1991 to June 1992 to coincide with the publication of the British crime survey results in the autumn.

By these changes we seek to further the Government's aim of providing a better quality of information to the public. We believe that a more rounded picture will be provided. It should facilitate better analysis of trends and so help ensure that future action against crime is based on an improved shared understanding of the problems which face us.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Naval Shipbuilding

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the naval shipbuilding industry in *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1992.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The number of employees in employment in the shipbuilding and ship repairing industry in Great Britain were as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| June 1970 | 171,000 |
| June 1979 | 135,000 |
| [1]Sept 1989 | 51,000 |

[1] Latest available.

## CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Science

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff directly report to him on scientific issues; and what is his relationship with the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** The total number of staff in the Office of Science and Technology is 89. I am considering what advisory structure would enable me to carry out my responsibilities for science and technology most effectively, and seeking views from all interested parties on the best way of achieving this.

### Duchy Income

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how much annual income from the Duchy of Lancaster is retained by the sovereign for her personal use;

(2) what proportion of the income to the privy purse from the Duchy of Lancaster has been retained by the sovereign in each year since 1962.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The application of moneys paid by the Duchy of Lancaster to the Keeper of the Privy Purse is a matter for the Privy Purse Office. The amounts are shown in the Duchy's accounts, which are placed in the Library of the House each year.

### Human Genome Project

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what computer science research is being supported by public funds to improve United Kingdom capability to process the data generated by the human genome project.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** The Government made available to the Medical Research Council an extra £11 million over three years to enable it to play a major role in the United Kingdom Human Genome Mapping Project—HGMP. The MRC has provided support for the installation of computing facilities at the HGMP resource centre, Northwick park, Harrow and, among others, to its National Institute for Medical Research and Laboratory of Molecular Biology for the development of software to process and store genome mapping data. The MRC has also agreed to contribute to the support of the human genome database—GDB—in the John Hopkins university, Baltimore, USA, and has contributed to the establishment of a GDB node at the Resource Centre, the first outside the USA.

There is no central information on other relevant work which the universities, medical schools or medical research charities may be supporting.

### Contracting-out

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the extent and nature of proposed open government provisions to contracting-out procedures in Government Departments.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** It has been this Government's established practice to ensure non-discrimination and fair competition in public procurement, as set out in administrative circulars issued by the central unit on purchasing in Her Majesty's Treasury. From December last year, EC rules, which in large part replicate United Kingdom best practice, were written into the United Kingdom legislation which will implement a further EC directive to ensure compliance throughout the EC.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consult the National Audit Office on measures to test the value-for-money considerations on any proposals to contract-out civil service work.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Comptroller and Auditor General has statutory powers to audit Government Departments and conduct value-for-money studies on the way they have used their resources in discharging their functions, which may include contracting out civil service work.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects an announcement to be made on the areas to be market tested in each Government Department; and what plans he has to publish this information.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) on 22 June 1992, at column *102*.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total cost to date of the market-testing initiatives in each Government Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** This information is not collected centrally.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what savings he expects each Government Department will make as a result of the market-testing programme.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** No such estimate has been made.

### Private Sector Contracts

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if it is his intention that private sector contractors who undertake civil service work will remain within the scope of public scrutiny; and will members of the public still have recourse to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in respect of activities which are contracted out.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Where civil servant work is contracted out following a market-testing exercise, the accountability of Ministers to Parliament remains unchanged. The Comptroller and Auditor General will continue to audit the Departments concerned. The jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is unaffected.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if foreign employees of private sector contractors will have to conform to established civil service practices on the confidentiality of information they may handle; and whether they will be required to sign the Offical Secrets Act 1989.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Private sector contractors undertaking classified work for Government Departments are obliged, through contract conditions, to conform to standard procedures for the protection of classified information. It is for contractors to enforce those obligations on their staff. Where the Official Secrets Act 1989 applies, employees receive notice that they are subject to the Act, and are normally required to sign a declaration acknowledging their obligations under it.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Commissioner Ripa di Meana

**Mr. Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request the United Kingdom ambassador to the European Community to seek an explanation from Commissioner Carlo Ripa di Meana as to why he has failed to reply to letters dated 1 March and 23 April, and to numerous telephone calls since that date from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton, concerning an environmental issue of concern to the Manchester, Gorton constituency.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** Signor Ripa di Meana has been appointed Minister for the Environment in the new Italian Administration with immediate effect. However, I have asked our permanent representation to ask the Commission services whether a reply to the right hon. Member's letters has been sent.

### Council of Ministers

**Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

**Mr. Hurd:** The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 13 July to conduct a multilateral surveillance of the economies of member states, including the examination of a national convergence programme. The Council will also consider the Commission's proposals for the future financing of the Community—Delors II—and work programme for meetings of the Economic and Finance Council for the next six months.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 13 and 14 July. Ministers will discuss CAP reform and Newcastle disease controls and possibly the review of sugar cane import arrangements. The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 20 July. It will consider the follow-up to the Lisbon European Council, including how to take forward preparations for enlargement, subsidiarity and the Community's future financing. The Council may discuss the state of negotiation on the GATT Uruguay round and the EC/US oilseed dispute and the negotiating mandate for a new EC/ASEAN co-operation agreement. The Council will also consider EC relations with the former Soviet Union, including trade and co-operation agreements; and may discuss the state of negotiations on the Romania and Bulgaria association agreements. Ministers will discuss the former Yugoslavia and the development of the Community's relations with Turkey. A co-operation council with Egypt will also be held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

The Budget Council will meet on 23 July to consider the 1993 preliminary draft budget submitted by the Commission and to establish the Council's 1993 draft budget.

### Maastricht Treaty

**Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific duties are to be imposed on citizens of the union including those in the United Kingdom under article G of the Maastricht treaty.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The provisions added to the treaty of Rome by the Maastricht treaty—articles 8 to 8e—which establish citizenship of the union refer to "duties" imposed by the treaty of Rome, but do not themselves impose any specific duties. The treaty of Rome in general, as amended by the Maastricht treaty, imposes no duties which do not flow from the direct effect of EC law.

### Entry Clearance Applications

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how often the deputy high commission in Karachi has asked for information or files from the high commission in Islamabad to deal with applications for entry clearance during the last 12 months.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The information requested could not be provided except at disproportionate expense. The deputy high commission in Karachi would need to check manually 25,000 case files.

### British Nationals (Overseas)

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the present holder of a British Hong Kong passport, who is issued with a replacement British national (overseas) passport, will need to apply, as appropriate, for a visitor visa or work permit to enter the United Kingdom; and whether the holder of a BN(O) passport will need a permanent identity card for entry to and exit from Hong Kong *(a)* currently and *(b)* after 1997.

**Mr. Goodlad:** As far as admission to the United Kingdom is concerned, the holder of a BN(O) passport is treated in an identical manner to the holder of a British dependent territory citizen's passport. He does not require a visa to visit the United Kingdom, but, with limited exceptions, would require a work permit if he intended to come to this country for employment.

At present, BN(O) passport holders may use either their passports or their permanent identity cards to leave or enter Hong Kong. We expect that this arrangement will continue after 30 June 1997.

### International Treaties

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the cases involving the United Kingdom in which there have been adjudications of enforceability of declarations or agreements appended to international treaties, including EC treaties.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** In the case of the EC treaties and the treaties amending them, there has been a practice of annexing protocols to the treaties and of adopting declarations in connection with conclusion of the treaties. By article 239 of the treaty of Rome, protocols annexed to the treaty form an integral part of it. They are, therefore, enforceable in exactly the same way as treaty provisions. A case involving the United Kingdom where this was done is Lord Bruce of Donington *v.* Aspden, case 208/80, applying the protocol on privileges and immunities of the European Communities. Conference declarations do not form an integral part of the treaty to which they relate, but, in accordance with the law of treaties, they are part of the context of the treaty for the purpose of its interpretation. I am aware of no decision of the European Court of Justice in which conference declarations of this kind have been pronounced upon.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the disability living allowance so that people can claim whatever their age.

**Mr. Scott:** We have no plans to do so.

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the cost of extending the disability living allowance scheme to cover people over the age of 65 years.

**Mr. Scott:** The annual cost of extending disability living allowance to all people who become disabled after the age of 65 is estimated, at 1992-93 prices, to be in excess of £2 billion.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what compensation can be claimed by applicants for disability living allowance, where the processing of *(a)* their claim or *(b)* successful appeal against a decision by the Benefits Agency on their claim has taken an excessive period of time;

(2) what is the average length of time taken by the Benefits Agency to process a claim for disability living allowance;

(3) what is the target maximum time within which a claim for disability living allowance should be processed.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time taken to consider applications for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* disability living allowance; and what are the target times laid down by his Department.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance and attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Cold Weather Payments

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what dates cold weather payments were triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payment on each occasion.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is available in the Library.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Lewisham, Deptford qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme; on what dates and in what parts of Lewisham, Deptford the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; how many households received payments on each occasion; on what dates cold weather payments were made in Lewisham, Deptford in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and if he will indicate the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Scott:** Such information as is available concerning the areas that have triggered and consequently the payments made are in the Library. Information concerning the number of customers who may qualify for a payment will be provided in writing from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates, and in which parts of Barnsley, the cold weather payments scheme was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in Barnsley in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and if he will indicate the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates, and in what parts of

north Warwickshire the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in north Warwickshire in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what was the average period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates in 1992 cold weather payments were made in Coventry, North-East in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what was the average period taken for payments to be made following the trigger;

(2) on what dates and in what parts of Coventry, North-East the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates, and in what parts of Leyton the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in Leyton in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and what were the periods taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what dates and in which parts of Rochdale the cold weather payments system was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in Rochdale in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and if he will indicate the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what occasions and in what parts of Dundee, East constituency the cold weather payments scheme was triggered during the winter of 1991-92; and how many households received payments on each occasion;

(2) on what dates cold weather payments were made in the Dundee, East constituency in response to a forecast of a qualifying period; and if he will indicate the period taken for payments to be made once the system had been triggered.

**Mr. Scott:** Such information as is available is in the Library.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Burnley constituency, subject to appropriate weather conditions, his Department estimates qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Barnsley qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Coventry, North-East qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in Leyton qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in north Warwickshire qualify for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many households in the Dundee, East constituency qualified for payments under the cold weather payments scheme.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Members with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

## Benefits Agency

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many copies of the Benefits Agency business plan have been produced and circulated; and at what cost.

**Mr. Burt:** The Benefits Agency business plan is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

## Allowances

**Mr. John Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what current delays there are in requests for reviews of attendance allowance, mobility allowance and disability allowance; and what the position was 12 months ago.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance, mobility allowance and attendance allowance are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public information Office.

## State Pension Age

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he plans to take following the end of the discussion period on the equalising of state pension age.

**Mr. Lilley:** The Government are committed to the equalisation of state pension age, and as a first step we published our discussion paper "Options for Equality in State Pension Age" in December last year. The paper invited comments and views on various approaches to equalisation including differing common pension ages and models for a flexible pension age.

The discussion period ended on 30 June and we have received more than 3,000 responses. I now intend to examine those responses in detail and I will also be taking the opportunity of meeting the representatives of various interested organisations to discuss their views. I am also prepared to take into account any late responses.

I will be announcing the Government's proposals on the complex and important issues covered by the paper in

due course after full consideration of the views expressed. No decisions have yet been taken as to what approach should be adopted.

I should like to make it very clear at the outset that no one expecting to retire in the next few years will be affected by these changes. Whichever option is chosen is likely to be phased in over a long period, and employees and employers will be given ample time to adjust their plans.

### Appeals

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the time within which an appeal against a decision of the Benefits Agency must be heard; and what provision is made in the citizens charter for this.

**Mr. Burt:** There is no statutory time limit within which appeals against decisions of adjudication officers in the Benefits Agency should be heard. However, both the Benefits Agency and the independent tribunal service are committed to handling appeals as expeditiously as possible. There is no specific provision in the citizens charter on time limits for hearing such appeals.

### Students

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he proposes to take to help students who are unable to find vacation work and have no other form of income during the summer period.

**Mr. Burt:** The social security system is not intended as a means of educational funding. Most students should look to the educational maintenance system for their financial support. Income support and housing benefit are still available to certain groups of students including disabled students and those with dependent children.

### Benefit Deductions

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the total number of organisations, bodies or companies approved for the purposes of making deductions from benefit either for *(a)* current consumption or *(b)* repayment of accumulated debt.

**Mr. Burt:** Third parties in the following general categories may, in prescribed circumstances, receive direct payments from income support for current charges or repayment of debts:

Mortgage lenders,
Landlords
Fuel companies,
Water and sewerage companies,
Local authority community charge collection departments,
Residential care and nursing homes[1],
Hostels.[1]

Independent adjudication officers are responsible for determining whether a deduction may be made in an individual case.

[1] Current charges only.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to set a maximum level of deductions from income support and other state benfits for the payment of current consumption and repayment of accumulated debt owing to water, gas, electricity and other utilities, crisis loans and other bodies approved for deduction and direct payment.

**Mr. Burt:** There are already limits to the amounts which may be deducted from a person's income support. Deductions to repay arrears of housing, gas, electricity and water debt may not exceed 3 × 5 per cent. of the income support personal allowance for a person aged 25 or over —currently £6·45 a week. Deductions for the repayment of community charge debt are not subject to this limit because income support was adjusted to take account of this liability.

Deductions to cover current charges for gas, electricity and water may be made in addition to this limit. These deductions, together with those for the repayment of housing and utility debt, may not exceed 25 per cent. of the total income support entitlement for the family, less housing costs, without the consent of the claimant. The current income support housing costs allowance may also be paid to the creditor in certain circumstances.

We have no plans to amend these limits.

Social fund officers take account of a person's existing commitments, which may include other deductions from benefit, before deciding on repayment terms for social fund loans.

### Maxwell Pensions

**Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has so far been paid out to Maxwell pensioners from the fund created by the Government; and how much money remains from the Government's initial allocation.

**Miss Widdecombe:** A grant of £228,000 has been made to trustees of the Maxwell Communication works pension scheme and one of £52,834 to trustees of the Headington pension plan. These grants were made from the up to £2·5 million in emergency funding announced on 8 June.

**Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what date he expects the trust fund for Maxwell pensioners to be set up by his Department.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Maxwell pensions unit is discussing urgently the terms of the Maxwell pensioners trust with its trustees. Once these terms have been agreed, the trust deed will be prepared and the trust set up. The Department has opened a bank account to hold voluntary contributions to the trust pending its establishment.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will amend regulation 64(2) of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 to enable housing benefit, payable in the form of a rent rebate or rent allowance and amounting to less than 50p a week, to be paid in a lump sum annually, quarterly or monthly.

**Mr. Burt:** We have no plans to do so.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Fisheries Decommissioning

8. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps have been taken to introduce an improved decommissioning scheme for fishermen.

**Mr. Curry:** The Government's proposals for effort control and decommissioning were set out in a consultation document which was issued to the industry on 29 April.

### "Health of the Nation"

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has had over his Department's reaction to "Health of the Nation".

**Mr. Soames:** The Department of Health has consulted fully with my Ministry over those policies in "Health of the Nation" where we have responsibility.

### Hens

13. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about poultry battery cages.

**Mr. Soames:** The Ministry receives a good deal of correspondence and other representations on this matter from many and varied interests.

24. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to improve the welfare of laying hens.

**Mr. Soames:** The Government wish to see major improvements in European Community welfare standards for laying hens.

### Soil Erosion

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to the letter deposited in the Library from Earl Howe to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, when he will state his policy on soil erosion.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Agricultural Development Advisory Service provides advice to farmers on how to avoid this localised problem. This will also be covered in the code of good agricultural practice for the protection of soil to be published next year.

### Common Agricultural Policy

15. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Farmers Union to discuss the implications of the CAP reform proposals on United Kingdom agriculture.

**Mr. Gummer:** On 24 June.

**Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the expected numbers of additional staff in the United Kingdom and EC needed to administer the reformed common agricultural policy.

**Mr. Curry:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 12 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *322*.

**Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to ensure consumer benefit from price cuts under common agricultural policy reform.

**Mr. Curry:** The retail food market in the United Kingdom is a highly competitive one, and no Government action is needed to ensure that consumers benefit from the significant reduction in support prices agreed as part of the CAP reform package. By the end of the reform period, I would expect the costs of agricultural support to consumers in the United Kingdom to be lower by some £1 billion.

### Whaling

16. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will report on the meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Glasgow.

17. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the Government's policy towards the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow at the end of this month.

20. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to maintain and improve the welfare of whales.

**Mr. Gummer:** I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

25. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the International Whaling Commission meeting in Glasgow.

**Mr. Curry:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

### Fish Conservation

18. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for national conservation measures and selective gear requirements to improve fish conservation and British waters.

**Mr. Curry:** A substantial package of EC and United Kingdom conservation measures was introduced from 1 June and there will be a ban on the use of twin-rig and multi-rig trawls in most nephrops fisheries from 1 January 1993. We are expecting further EC proposals to reduce discards and a report on industrial fisheries in the North sea.

### General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

19. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the latest progress on reaching an agreement on agriculture within the GATT talks.

**Mr. Gummer:** The European Community and the United States are continuing their talks on the GATT agriculture dossier.

### Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

21. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest progress on his Ministry's research into BSE.

**Mr. Soames:** A report by the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee—the Tyrrell committee—on spongiform encephalopathy research in the United Kingdom was published on 30 June. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

## "Agriculture in the UK"

22. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of his Ministry's document "Agriculture in the UK".

**Mr. Curry:** It will continue to be published.

## EC-USA Trade Dispute

23. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the value of United Kingdom food and drink exports which would be hit in the current trade dispute between the United States of America and the EEC.

**Mr. Gummer:** It is estimated that United Kingdom exports of food and drink worth up to £160 million annually could be affected if the United States Government decide to introduce punitive tariffs on EC products as a result of their dispute with the Community over oilseeds.

## Organic Farming

26. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to secure the encouragement of extensification in agriculture and organic food production during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC Council of Ministers.

**Mr. Curry:** The new agri-environment regulation agreed as part of the recent common agricultural policy reform package will provide for schemes to encourage extensification and organic food production.

## Tomatoes

27. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has received from tomato growers on the reference price system and the system of offer prices for tomato imports from Spain and third countries, such as Morocco.

**Mr. Curry:** We have received representations from and on behalf of tomato growers about the effect on early season market prices of the recent extension of the offer price system to imports from the Canary islands. We have received no representations about third country imports.

## Food Safety

28. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the measures his Ministry is taking to improve food safety in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Soames:** Since the establishment of the Food Safety Act 1990, we have continued to demonstrate a commitment to the highest possible standards of food safety and consumer protection. We operate a comprehensive food monitoring and surveillance system and have produced an attractive series of publications for consumers. The latter inform consumers about the action the Government have taken on food safety, and also the action they can take for themselves. This recognised that consumers have an important part to play in ensuring that food remains safe between purchase and consumption.

## Arable Regime

**Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what decisions have been taken on the detailed arrangements for area payments and set-aside under the new arable regime.

**Mr. Gummer:** The Council of Agriculture Ministers this week adopted the legal texts governing the new system of area payments for producers of cereals, oilseeds and protein crops. These are part of the package of measures agreed in principle in May which aim to bring cereal prices down by some 30 per cent. over three years. The price cuts will bring producers nearer the marketplace and, together with the new area payments, mark a major step in reform of the common agricultural policy.

The area payments will apply to cereals, oilseeds—rapeseed, soya and sunflower seed—and protein crops—peas for harvesting dry, field beans and sweet lupins—including fodder crops. Producers will be able to claim payments based on the area of cereals, oilseeds and protein crops grown, provided that they meet the conditions of the scheme, including the requirement to set aside a proportion of their land. Separate arrangements will apply for those claiming aid on a small area—less than around 15 or 16 hectares. The transitional EC oilseeds support scheme will be integrated into the new system.

The United Kingdom, like other member states, will not be able to draw up detailed rules for the scheme until the European Commission's implementing regulations are tabled and agreed. I want to get these adopted as soon as possile but they will deal with important and difficult issues, including the effective prevention of fraud across the whole Community, and inevitably it will be a few weeks before they are settled as the United Kingdom and other member states will need to make sure that they are satisfactory. However, the scheme applies to cropping in 1992-93 and farmers should begin planning now on the basis of the information that is available. To help them, a short leaflet is available on demand from the Ministry's regional service centres and the offices of the other Agriculture Departments. I have also placed copies in the Library of the House. Once further details are available, the Agriculture Departments will issue an explanatory booklet to all known cereals, oilseeds and protein producers.

Two schemes will be available. Under the simplified scheme, there will be no set-aside requirement, but claims will be limited to around 15 or 16 hectares; the payment rate for 1992-93 will be around £116 per hectare whether the crop is cereals, oilseeds or proteins.

The general scheme will offer payments of around £116 per hectare for cereals, £301 per hectare for proteins and £375 per hectare for oilseeds for 1992-93. In order to claim these aids, farmers will have to set aside 15 hectares of land for every 85 hectares of cereals, oilseeds and proteins they intend growing. Thus the set-aside area should equal 15 per cent. of the total of the arable area on which aid is being claimed and the area set aside. Land must be set aside from this autumn to qualify for payment of area aid and set-aside compensation in the autumn of 1993. Payments of around £208 per hectare will be made on set-aside land but only up to the area needed to satisfy the 15 per cent requirement. These figures are approximate and based on average United Kingdom yields. The actual payment rates will depend on historic regional yields. Land which was in permanent grass—including rough

grazing and moorland—woodland, permanent crops or non-agricultural use at 31 December 1991 will not be eligible for area or set-aside payments.

Claims for aid will have to be submitted by 15 May 1993—possibly earlier for oilseeds. Claim forms will be available later this year. It is likely that, in the first year of the scheme, claimants will have to submit a 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map, or in Northern Ireland the equivalent survey map, of their holding. We shall need these to ensure that area aids are not claimed on land that is ineligible. This is in producers' own interests too, because the aid per hectare may be reduced if more land comes into arable production. Farmers may wish to order or buy maps now. Payments will probably be made in November and December 1993. There may continue to be separate arrangements for oilseed payments.

Although there is no restriction on individual farmers expanding their areas of cereals, oilseeds and protein production, regional base areas will equal the average annual area of cereals, oilseeds and proteins grown and land fallowed under set-aside in the region concerned over the period 1989-1991. If claims for area payments—including set-aside—exceed the regional base area in any one year, claimants will have the area on which their claims are paid reduced proportionately that year. The following year there will be an additional uncompensated set-aside requirement.

Producers will not be able to count any land already set aside under the five-year set-aside scheme towards their new set-aside commitment, but they will be given the opportunity to opt out of the five-year scheme if they so wish. Further details will be sent to five-year set-aside participants when they become available.

The next stage will be the tabling and adoption of Commission implementing regulations. Once this legal framework is clear, we shall announce the payment rates. Further details, including the management conditions for the set-aside land, will also depend on the implementing regulations. We shall notify farmers of the relevant rules as soon as possible. A statutory instrument will be laid before the House to implement those details of the scheme that are not contained in Community legislation.

## Animals for Slaughter

**Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, during the United Kingdom presidency of the EC, he plans to try to secure an overall journey time limit for slaughter animals.

**Mr. Soames:** In our presidency role, we will be seeking to ensure that the Council reaches agreement on the additional rules which need to be adopted before 1 January 1993, when directive 91/628 on protection of animals during transport comes into effect. The United Kingdom delegation will emphasise in particular the need for a strict limitation on the time that animals can travel without rest, food or water.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many horses, ponies and other equines were exported for slaughter during the past year; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Soames:** No licences for the export of equines from Great Britain for slaughter have been issued. The European Community has recognised the special needs of equines and this is reflected in directive 91/628 on the protection of animals during transport.

## Inheritance Tax (Exemptions)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Ministry will reduce the level of payments under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme where the land involved is subject to exemptions to inheritance tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** No.

## Thames Flood Defences

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement outlining how future maintenance costs of the Thames flood defences, including the Thames barrier will be funded;

(2) what representations he has received from the Thames regional flood defence committee over the possible future maintenance costs of the Thames flood defences by the turn of the century and the limited time period over which it will be necessary to carry out this work; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the Government's policy towards maintenance by the Thames regional flood defence committee of its financial balances; and what account has been taken of the case for a contingency fund to pay for future essential maintenance work.

**Mr. Curry:** The maintenance costs of flood defences which are the responsibility of the National Rivers Authority (NRA), such as the Thames flood defences, are normally funded through levies on local authorities, while capital works may be eligible for grant aid from this Department. In 1989, the Thames region of the NRA inherited substantial financial balances from its predecessor, the Thames Water Authority, in respect of future work on the Thames barrier, and these balances have been the subject of detailed discussions between NRA Thames region and the Government. Public sector bodies such as the NRA do not normally hold financial reserves in anticipation of future expenditure, since public sector accounting rules lay down that funds should not be sought in advance of need. The Government and the NRA therefore agreed that the Thames region balances should be used to fund maintenance and renewal works on the Thames flood defences over the next few years, with a view to running them down no later than March 1997. Thereafter, work on the Thames flood defences will be financed as normal through a combination of levies on local authorities and, where applicable, MAFF grant.

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the National Rivers Authority's estimate of the likely maintenance cost of the Thames flood defences, including the Thames barrier, at the turn of the century; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Curry:** The National Rivers Authority estimates that the cost of the recurring annual maintenance of the Thames tidal defences, including the Thames and Barking barriers, at the turn of the century is £3·5 million.

## Milk Quotas

**Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to remove discimination for tenant farmers in the sale or transfer of milk quotas.

**Mr. Curry:** The current EC negotiations on the consolidation and simplification of the milk quota regulations will include consideration of landlord/tenant issues in relation to quota transfers. We will seek to ensure that any provisions agreed take account of the interests of all parties concerned, including tenants.

## Spongiform Encephalopathies

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for those animals involved in his Department's research programmes on spongiform encephalopathies, how many were *(a)* fed infected offal and *(b)* not fed infected offal; and how many in each case (i) developed and (ii) have not developed spongiform encephalopathy, distinguishing between (1) cattle and (2) other animals.

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is contained in my letter to the hon. Member in reply to his question of 12 June, in respect of those animals to which BSE has been transmitted successfully. Copies of my letter are placed in the Library of the House.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 3 July 1992*

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Serious Fraud Office

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Attorney-General how many officers of police forces are presently seconded to the Serious Fraud Office; from which police forces they are drawn; and on which inquiries they are employed.

**The Attorney-General:** Ninety-three police officers from six police forces are presently seconded to the Serious Fraud Office. In addition, the Serious Fraud Office receives assistance from a number of officers from provincial forces who are investigating cases for the SFO, but who are not actually seconded to that office. For operational reasons the Director of the SFO does not identify the police forces providing assistance to his office at any particular time or their deployment.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Ministerial Correspondence

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the latest figures, by Department, showing the volume of ministerial correspondence from hon. Members, the targets set for reply and the percentage of replies sent within target.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The 1991 figures are set out in the table.

*Ministerial correspondence from MPs—1991*

| *Department, and target set for reply* | *Number of letters received* | *Percentage replies within target* |
|---|---|---|
| *7 working day target:* | | |
| Northern Ireland Office[1, 2] | [3]719 | 46 |
| *10 working day target:* | | |
| Central Statistical Office | 36 | 92 |
| Department of Trade and Industry | [1, 4]16,180 | 92 |
| Welsh Office[5] | [1]8,018 | 89 |
| Department of Energy | 2,075 | [6]74 |
| Cabinet Office (OMCS) | 49 | 71 |
| Ministry of Defence[7] | 895 | 70 |
| Office of Arts and Libraries | 462 | 69 |
| Treasury[8] | [9]2,268 | 64 |
| Scottish Office[5] | 9,605 | [10]24 |
| Foreign and Commonwealth Office | [9]11,378 | [12]— |
| *13 working day target:* | | |
| Inland Revenue[9] | [9, 13]2,345 | 78 |
| Customs and Excise[1, 8] | [9]1,673 | 66 |
| *15 working day target:* | | |
| Overseas Development Administration | 4,001 | 83 |
| Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food | 9,984 | 76 |
| Legal Secretariat to the Law Office | 662 | 75 |
| Northern Ireland Office[1, 2] | [14]588 | 66 |
| Ministry of Defence[7] | 6,776 | 58 |
| Department of the Environment | 21,818 | 54 |
| Crown Prosecution Service | 100 | [15]39 |
| Department of Transport | [16]1,398 | 26 |
| *17 working day target:* | | |
| Department of Employment | 7,330 | 84 |
| *18 working day target:* | | |
| Inland Revenue[9] | [9, 17]514 | 33 |
| *20 working day target:* | | |
| Lord Chancellor's Department[5] | 4,130 | 82 |
| Department of Social Security | [18]13,699 | 68 |
| Department of Education and Science[19] | [11]17,295 | 62 |
| Department of Health | 15,359 | 60 |
| *Other* | | |
| Home Office[20] | 21,939 | — |

[1] Includes all Ministerial replies, not only letters from MPs.
[2] Figures for NI Departments cover October-December; those for NIO cover November-December.
[3] Replies signed by Minister.
[4] Includes correspondence for Export Credits Guarantee Department.
[5] Target for officials to submit draft reply to Ministers' Private Offices.
[6] Estimated figure based on sample of correspondence received.
[7] MOD uses two target periods, which is a reflection of the different volume of Ministerial correspondence handled by the offices involved.
[8] Target for officials to submit draft reply to Treasury Ministerial Correspondence Unit.
[9] Figures only available for period June-December.
[10] 60 per cent. of letters received by The Scottish Office received replies within 20 working days.
[11] Includes some letters signed by officials.
[12] FCO did not monitor performance against target in 1991.
[13] All cases where local office reports are not required.
[14] Replies signed by Private Secretary to Minister.
[15] 71 per cent. of letters received from the Law Officers received replies within 20 working days.
[16] Figures for 1991 are only available for period mid-November to end December (which includes the Christmas recess) and are not thought to be representative of the Department's performance over the whole year.
[17] All cases where local office reports are required.
[18] Includes replies by Chief Executives of Agencies.
[19] Represents 1992 target.
[20] No single target for 1991. Monitoring showed average time taken to be 29-42 working days. New arrangements are being considered for 1992-93.

## EDUCATION

### Higher Education Corporations

**Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many individuals, shown by gender, received part-time hourly contracts of employment in each Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council-funded higher education corporation in the most recent year for which statistics are available;

(2) how many lecturers were employed in each PCFC-funded higher education corporation on each salary grade at lecturer level or above in the most recent year for which statistics are available, shown by gender;

(3) how many academic staff, at the level of lecturers or above, in each PCFC-funded higher education corporation left the employment of such an institution in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 for reasons of *(a)* early retirement or *(b)* health breakdown; and if he will provide the figures by gender.

**Mr. Forman:** This information is not available centrally.

### Lecturers

**Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many lecturers are employed in each further education college and adult education institute in England and Wales on each salary grade in the most recent year for which statistics are available, shown by gender.

**Mr. Forman:** These data are not collected centrally.

### Truancy

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the latest annual statistics on the number of school days lost because of truancy; and what manpower and resources are available to deal with the problem.

**Mr. Forth:** Information on the number of school days lost due to truancy is not collected centrally. Some 3,000 education welfare officers are employed by local education authorities in England and Wales to work with schools and parents in promoting regular school attendance. The Department is also currently supporting 31 local projects designed to improve school attendance under the grants for education support and training (GEST) programme.

### Religious Education

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that in the circumstances of local management of schools and grant-maintained status, the resources for support of religious education in schools associated with the responsibilities of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education will be sufficient to enable them to fulfil their statutory obligations.

**Mr. Forth:** It is the responsibility of local education authorities to allocate the resources at their disposal to ensure that they, their schools and standing advisory councils on religious education are able to meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of religious education and collective worship.

### Students

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment the Government have made of the need for additional student financial support this summer.

**Mr. Forman:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 25 June, *Official Report*, column *273*, which described the substantial increases already announced in student support. We do not consider that additional provision is required.

### Jamborees

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what public funds are available to assist members of the scouting movement and other youth organisations from eastern and central Europe to attend jamborees and similar gatherings being held and organised by their counterparts in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Forman:** My Department has no funds available for this purpose.

### Euroform

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the EC scheme Euroform, and its aims, funding and achievements to date.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I have been asked to reply.

EUROFORM is one of three human resource initiatives under the European social fund. It funds transnational partnerships between organisations in two or more member states and is designed to develop and promote new occupational qualifications, new skills and new employment opportunities responding to the single market and technological change.

The central aim of the initiative is the transfer of knowledge and expertise between member states. The objectives of EUROFORM are to provide a Community dimension for vocational training and employment promotion projects, to foster the convergence of occupational skills and qualifications and promote the occupational and geographical mobility of workers.

The EUROFORM programme in Great Britain was allocated 31·3 mecu—£21·8 million—for a three-year period 1991-93. Approximately £13 million was allocated to projects submitted under the first round of applications in November 1991, and 92 projects were approved in principle for funding. A second round took place in April 1992 and a further 83 projects were selected, thereby committing virtually all remaining funds.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Mozambique

**Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account has been taken in United Kingdom policy towards Mozambique of the 1991 EEC report concerning appropriation of international aid to Mozambique by the Frelimo Government and officials.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The report concerned the provision of EC food aid to the market sector. Following pressure from the EC, the Mozambique Government have tightened up their procedures and introduced new regulations for the handling of such food aid.

Our bilateral food aid programme for Mozambique is for free distribution to those most in need, not for the market sector. It was in the market sector, and related to the payment of counterpart funds, that the problem identified in the EC report arose. Furthermore, the procurement and close monitoring by British-based non-governmental organisations of all our food aid for Mozambique further reduce the possibility of our aid being misappropriated.

### Madagascar

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he will make via the World Food Programme, the EC or bilaterally to the famine relief effort in Madagascar; and what estimate he makes of the number of people who will be fed, and for how long, by the British contribution.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** So far this year, the European Community has provided over 13,000 tonnes of food aid for Madagascar, worth £1·3 million, including 12,000 tonnes of cereals delivered in April. The United Kingdom share of the cost of this food aid is £235,000. In addition, the Commission is planning an early contribution to a World Food Programme (WFP) project aimed at feeding 700,000 people in the south of Madagascar.

In parallel with this initiative, the WFP—to which the United Kingdom is a significant contributor—will be launching a new programme for early delivery of 27,000 tonnes of food. This programme, to be spread over eight months, is expected to feed a further 320,000 people. Finally, Her Majesty's Government have just approved a bilateral grant to the WFP of £25,000 for local purchase of maize and beans in Madagascar.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Subsidiarity

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Prime Minister if he plans to convene any meetings in Scotland to discuss the subsidiarity principle during his presidency of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** The Lisbon European Council invited the Commission and the Council to undertake urgent work on the procedural and practical steps to implement the principle of subsidiarity and to report to the European Council in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December. This will be an important priority during our presidency.

### Disability

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to establish a ministerial committee on disability.

**The Prime Minister:** I have no such plans. Officials of the interdepartmental group on disability regularly provide advice to the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People.

### Lockerbie

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister when he will discuss with the Government of Spain the Lockerbie-related issues arising from legal proceedings against Monzer-el-Kassar.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—gave to him on 24 June at column *211*.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Flue Gas Desulphurisation

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make representations to the power generating companies to ensure that flue gas desulphurisation equipment and scrubbers are fitted to all power stations in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Maclean:** Implementation of integrated pollution control under part I of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, for power stations and other prescribed processes, is a matter for the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, subject to any directions or other requirements laid on him by the Secretary of State. These include the Secretary of State's national programme and plan for implementation of the EC large combustion plants directive. The plan includes a commitment to the retrofitting of 8,000 MW of electricity generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation.

### Football Grounds

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing legislation to allow local planning authorities to designate football grounds as metropolitan open space or green belt.

**Mr. Baldry:** Metropolitan open land is found only in London and has the same status as green belt. Under existing legislation, it is open to local planning authorities in their development plans to designate land, including playing fields, as open space or green belt where the area concerned meets certain criteria. In respect of playing fields, the criteria are set out in paragraphs 41 to 44 of planning policy guidance note 17. In respect of green belts, the criteria are set out in paragraphs seven to 11 of planning policy guidance note 2.

### Orimulsion

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what scientific evidence his Department has on the percentage content of heavy metals in orimulsion; and what assessment he has made of the implications for the ecosystem of burning this fuel at power stations in the United Kingdom;

(2) what scientific evidence his Department has requested from other countries in which orimulsion is burnt; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The environmental effects of burning orimulsion at power stations are being considered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in respect of applications made to it under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. In considering these applications, I understand HMIP has requested and received information both from the United Kingdom and from abroad, including information about the heavy metal content of orimulsion.

This includes an independent analysis of orimulsion carried out for my Department which showed the following percentage of heavy metals: vanadium 0·035 per cent. and nickel 0·007 per cent. chromium, manganese, copper, arsenic, cadmium and lead are all less than one 10,000th part of 1 per cent.

### Second-hand Car Sales

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to prohibit the use by organisations of the highway outside residential properties for displaying second-hand cars for sale.

**Mr. Baldry:** Use of the highway to sell vehicles commercially may constitute a business activity and require specific planning consent. The responsibility of controlling breaches of planning control rests with local planning authorities, which must decide in each case whether it is in the interests of good planning in their areas to take action against development in breach of planning controls. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 has provided planning authorities with a range of new enforcement measures for dealing effectively and speedily with such breaches.

### Energy Efficiency

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Glasgow, Maryhill, qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 3,734 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the Makerfield constituency qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of houselolds eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 1,502 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Ms. Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in Rochdale qualify for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean:** In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency, 447 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the Dundee, East constituency qualified for grant aid under the home energy efficiency scheme; and how many houses have been improved in the constituency under the scheme since its inception in 1991.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* In order to be eligible for grant under the home energy efficiency scheme, an applicant or his or her spouse must be in receipt of one of five passportable benefits: housing benefit, income support, family credit, community charge benefit and disability working allowance. In addition, his or her property must meet certain criteria concerning existing levels of insulation and receipt of a grant for similar work under previous schemes. Data on numbers of households eligible in any particular area at a particular time are not available.

Figures for the number of homes treated under the scheme are not collected on a constituency basis. Within the network installer area which contains the hon. Member's constituency. 3,136 homes have benefited from HEES grant since 1 January 1991.

### Leases

**Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to introduce legislation to enable the lessees of flats under long leases to extend their leases.

**Mr. Baldry:** We plan to introduce in this Session, after the recess, measures to enable long leaseholders of flats either to acquire the freehold collectively or, if the building does not qualify for collective enfranchisement, to extend their leases.

### EC Bathing Water Directive

**Mr. Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about compliance with the European Community bathing water directive.

**Mr. Maclean:** Seventy-six per cent. of identified bathing waters complied with the directive's mandatory coliform standards in the 1991 bathing season. This compares with 51 per cent. in 1986. A £2 billion programme of improvements is under way to bring virtually all the waters up to standard by 1995.

### Disabled People

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the test of resources that applies to renovation grants and disabled facilities grants for works required by people with disabilities, what assessment he has made of the effect the means test on whether disabled people obtain the adaptions they need; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** The details of the test of resources for house renovation and disabled facilities grants are set out in the Housing Renovation Etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990—S.I. 1990 No. 1189. They are also summarised in the Department's circular 12/90, on house renovation grants, issued on 20 June 1990. Copies of these documents are available in the Library. The Department's monitoring shows that over 80 per cent. of recipients of mandatory disabled facilities grants receive 100 per cent. grants for the full cost of adaptations. On average, disabled people contribute only 5 per cent. of the cost of grant-aided works. The effect of the means test on grant applicants, including the disabled, has been considered as part of the recent review of the grant system. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the conclusions of the review of the renovation and disabled facilities grants scheme; what changes were introduced as a result of the review; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** The findings of the review of the house renovation grant system, including disabled facilities grants, are currently under consideration. We hope to make an announcement shortly.

### Local Government Commission

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce further appointments to the Local Government Commission.

**Mr. Redwood:** When I announced the initial appointments to the Local Government Commission on 15 June, I indicated that we would be making further appointments shortly. We are now appointing three further members to the commission:

Professor Malcolm Grant
Howell Harris Hughes
David Thomas

These appointments broaden the range of interests and experience on the commission while maintaining the balance and independence which will be essential to it in formulating its recommendations. We have no plans to make further appointments in the near future.

### Inheritance Tax (Exemptions)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will reduce the level of payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 management agreements where the land involved is exempted from inheritance tax; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* Matters of taxation are primarily for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Paragraphs 47 to 49 of DOE circular 3/84—"Financial Guidelines for Management Agreements"—contains provision for agreements to be terminated if conditional exemption from inheritance tax is granted, for annual payments to cease and for partial recoupment from the landowner where a lump sum has been paid.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Job Centres

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether job centre staff in Larne or any other job centre in Northern Ireland can be selective regarding the issue of application forms to applicants; and if he will ensure that all sections of the community have equality of access to application forms for job vacancies;

(2) if he will list the regulations that relate to the requirement on applicants to a job centre for an application form to provide the job centre staff with information regarding the first school attended before receiving an application form.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Training and Employment Agency is committed to delivering all its service in a way which promotes equality of opportunity for all its customers regardless of religion, gender, disability or marital status. All agency offices issue application forms to job seekers who meet the criteria for the post as laid down by the employer. Primary school data is used to monitor the agency's equality policy, but it is not a condition for the issue of application forms that this information is provided by an applicant.

### Maghaberry Prison

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, following his reply on 30 June to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), *Official Report*, column *475*, if he will indicate the results of the charges made against those prisoners in Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry, female section, who were charged with *(a)* disobeying a lawful order, *(b)* offending against good order of the prison and *(c)* committing an assault, indicating how many of the prisoners were dealt with summarily, how many were legally represented and what were the punishments which were inflicted.

**Mr. Mates:** All 22 prisoners charged were adjudicated on by the governor in accordance with Prison Rules (NI) 1982. Twenty-one of these prisoners were found guilty as charged and were given awards as listed below. None was legally represented.

(a) Twenty-one were found guilty of refusing to obey an order to undergo full search and awarded seven days' loss of remission, 14 days' loss of afternoon yards and 14 days' loss of evening association. Those prisoners on remand had loss of remission contingent upon conviction.

(b) Seven prisoners were also found guilty of erecting barricades and were awarded 14 days' loss of remission consecutive to the seven days lost at *(a)* above with 28 days' loss of afternoon yards and 42 days' loss of evening association concurrent to *(a)*. They were also awarded three days' cellular confinement.

(c) Seven were further charged with assaulting staff. Six have their charges still to be heard. One was found guilty and awarded 14 days' loss of remission, consecutive to *(a)* above with 28 days' loss of evening association plus three days' cellular confinement.

Fifteen of the prisoners were granted judicial review of the governor's adjudications and 12 were granted interim relief in the High Court on 20 charges. The cases were heard on 12 June, but judgment has been reserved.

### Irish Republic

**Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek the removal of those elements of the constitution of the Irish Republic that lay claim to part of the territory of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The Government believe that there should be a place in strands 2 and 3 of the talks for a discussion of constitutional issues. My predecessor's statement of 26 March 1991 made it clear that it would be open to each of the participants in the talks to raise any aspects of the relevant relationships including constitutional issues. The Government will seek, as a product of the talks process as a whole, an unambiguously expressed consensus on the constitutional issues and a framework for relationships which will be genuinely acceptable to all. We believe that such an outcome should thereby enable all participants to acknowledge Northern Ireland's present status as a part of the United Kingdom, and to recognise that there will be no change in that status without the consent of a majority of the people who live there, that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change but that, if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, both Governments will introduce and support legislation to give effect to that wish. In so far as this is considered to have implications for articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, I welcome the Taoiseach's public assurance that they are among the constitutional matters which the Irish Government envisage would be "on the conference table" during the talks.

### Human Rights Commission

**Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the 17th report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The report, for the period 1 April 1991 to March 1992, was published on 2 July and copies have been laid before Parliament. Copies of the report an my response to it were placed in the Library yesterday.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Lantex, Linwood

**Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many former workers at Lantex at St. James business centre, Linwood, Renfrewshire, have yet to receive redundancy pay.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** All but six former employees of Lawtex Babywear Ltd. have received their full entitlement, and these outstanding payments will be received very shortly.

### Training Credits

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if it is her policy that training credits for young people should be for training that would not otherwise have been given.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I refer the hon. Member to the training credit prospectuses, issued in 1990 and 1991, which can be found in the Library.

### Long-term Unemployment

**Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to introduce unemployment and training schemes aimed specifically at people aged 40 years and over, among the long-term unemployed.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Department's employment and training programmes are open to people unemployed for more than six months who are between the age of 18 and the state pension age, except for employment training and employment action where the upper limit is currently 59. We keep our provision for unemployed people under continual review, and have no plans for a scheme specifically restricted to people aged 40 or over.

### Building Apprenticeships

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full apprenticeships in the building trade were begun in the north-west in each of the last five years and in 1981, 1971, 1961.

**Mr. Baldry:** The information requested is not available. The available information relates to the value of orders received by contractors for new construction work in 1991, by region subdivided by public sector and private sector clients. This is published in table 2.8 of "Housing and Construction Statistics" part 2, No. 48, a copy of which is in the Library.

## WALES

### Factor 8

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the operation of the Medicines Act (Exemptions from Licences) (Importation) Order 1984 —SI, 1984, No. 673—in relation to named patient arrangements for the supply of unlicensed factor 8 preparations and other unlicensed pharmaceutical products.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health on 1 July, *Official Report*, column *636*. Responsibility for the operation of the Medicines Act (Exemptions from Licences) (Importation) Order 1984 (SI, 1984, No. 673) is a matter for the Medicines Control Agency, which is an executive agency of the Department of Health.

### Assisted Areas

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the estimated cash value of assisted area status in Wales for each year since 1979;

(2) what is his estimate of the cash value for each assisted area in Wales for each year since 1979;

(3) if he will give the cash amount of assistance to industry in Wales in 1979, 1983 and 1991.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Gentleman with such information as my Department can provide and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

### Unemployment

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state, for Wales and by county, the number of people unemployed for *(a)* more than six months but less than 12 months, *(b)* more than 12 months but less than two years and *(c)* more than two years, sub-divided for males and females; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The latest month for which data is available is April 1992. The numbers unemployed in each of the categories requested are available from the NOMIS database, which can be accessed on-line by House of Commons Library staff.

The following tables show the information as requested:

*Unemployed for more than six months and less than 12 months*[1]

| | *Male* | *Female* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 2,727 | 809 | 3,536 |
| Dyfed | 2,469 | 841 | 3,310 |
| Gwent | 3,240 | 880 | 4,120 |
| Gwynedd | 2,057 | 660 | 2,717 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 4,244 | 977 | 5,221 |
| Powys | 477 | 169 | 646 |
| South Glamorgan | 3,599 | 901 | 4,500 |
| West Glamorgan | 2,830 | 714 | 3,544 |
| Wales | 21,643 | 5,951 | 27,594 |

[1] Unadjusted.

*Source:* Employment Department.

*Unemployed for more than 12 months and less than two years*[1]

| | *Male* | *Female* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 2,086 | 381 | 2,467 |
| Dyfed | 2,162 | 433 | 2,595 |
| Gwent | 3,486 | 603 | 4,089 |
| Gwynedd | 1,556 | 367 | 1,923 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 4,910 | 676 | 5,586 |
| Powys | 383 | 96 | 479 |
| South Glamorgan | 3,508 | 536 | 4,044 |
| West Glamorgan | 2,750 | 439 | 3,189 |
| Wales | 20,841 | 3,531 | 24,372 |

[1] Unadjusted.

*Source:* Employment Department.

*Unemployed for more than two years*[1]

| | *Male* | *Female* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 1,082 | 246 | 1,328 |
| Dyfed | 958 | 210 | 1,168 |
| Gwent | 2,272 | 434 | 2,706 |
| Gwynedd | 1,168 | 276 | 1,444 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 3,259 | 498 | 3,757 |
| Powys | 184 | 50 | 234 |
| South Glamorgan | 2,286 | 330 | 2,616 |
| West Glamorgan | 1,583 | 228 | 1,811 |
| Wales | 12,792 | 2,272 | 15,064 |

[1] Unadjusted.

*Source:* Employment Department.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### International Whaling Commission

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will report on the progress achieved so far at this week's meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Glasgow.

**Mr. Gummer:** The IWC meeting in Glasgow, which I opened earlier in the week, is expected to conclude its work later today. There has been a series of achievements in our efforts to protect whales and cetaceans which we greatly welcome.

Discussions continue today on the development of tougher and more prudent means of stock management. We have made clear that we will not even consider any resumption of commercial whaling unless stocks are healthy; there are tough, transparent and fully agreed systems of monitoring and inspection; and there are methods of killing whales which are humane. Our approach is shared by many other countries. Meanwhile, the moratorium on all commercial whaling will remain firmly in place. We shall not support requests for any form of interim quota.

A new United Kingdom proposal, dealing with research into Antarctic ecosystems, and the impact of global environmental changes on whale stocks, has been adopted. The United Kingdom will be playing a full part in these studies.

We have strongly endorsed resolutions to study the establishment of a circumpolar whale sanctuary such that this may be adopted at the IWC's 45th meeting next May. In the meantime, we co-sponsored a successful resolution securing a whale sanctuary in the Indian Ocean for a further 10-year period.

On humane killing, the United Kingdom has carried forward its strong commitment. We gained IWC agreement to a special three-day workshop in Glasgow last week under the independent chairmanship of Professor Sir Richard Harrison. An 11-point action plan has now been agreed, calling for more research, regular reviews on methods and their effectiveness, and analyses of times to death. We are presently pressing for action on the cruelty aspects of the Faroese pilot whale hunt.

Discussions continue today on the scientific whaling programmes proposed by Norway and Japan. We shall oppose these as failing to meet in full the needs of the IWC's criteria for lethal research.

Finally, although good progress is being made, the work of the IWC this week has been made doubly difficult by Norway's announcement on Monday that it will resume commercial whaling next year, regardless of future decisions of the Commission. We have already strongly condemned this—and so have 17 Commissioners—as seriously undermining the IWC and the work that it is trying to do to protect the world's whale stocks.

### Spongiform Encephalopathies

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of confirmed cases of BSE in each county of England and Wales since 1 June.

**Mr. Soames:** The number of cases confirmed for England and Wales from 29 May to 26 June is as follows:

| County | Confirmed cases |
|---|---|
| *England* | |
| Avon | 68 |
| Bedfordshire | 7 |
| Berkshire | 17 |
| Buckinghamshire | 23 |
| Cambridge | 7 |
| Cheshire | 109 |
| Cleveland | 3 |
| Cornwall | 285 |
| Cumbria | 129 |
| Derbyshire | 70 |
| Devon | 410 |
| Dorset | 252 |
| Durham | 26 |
| Essex | 14 |
| Gloucestershire | 69 |
| Hampshire | 76 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 65 |
| Hertfordshire | 12 |
| Humberside | 22 |
| Isle of Wight | 18 |
| Kent | 43 |
| Lancashire | 137 |
| Leicestershire | 56 |
| Lincolnshire | 20 |
| London | 3 |
| Manchester | 3 |
| Merseyside | 7 |
| Norfolk | 108 |
| Northamptonshire | 17 |
| Northumberland | 31 |
| Nottinghamshire | 16 |
| Oxon | 49 |
| Shropshire | 119 |
| Somerset | 313 |
| Staffordshire | 134 |
| Suffolk | 37 |
| Surrey | 24 |
| Sussex East | 47 |
| Sussex West | 56 |
| Tyne and Wear | 2 |
| Warwickshire | 42 |
| West Midlands | 4 |
| Wiltshire | 156 |
| Yorkshire North | 166 |
| Yorkshire South | 15 |
| Yorkshire West | 24 |
| *Wales* | |
| Clwyd | 56 |
| Dyfed | 218 |
| Glamorgan Mid | 2 |
| Glamorgan South | 6 |
| Glamorgan West | 5 |
| Gwent | 20 |
| Gwynedd | 13 |
| Powys | 52 |

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of *(a)* confirmed and *(b)* suspected cases of BSE in each county or region in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for the seven days in the week ending 19 June.

**Mr. Gummer:** The information as requested from 12 to 19 June 1992 is as follows. The confirmed cases will have a date of clinical onset of disease and date of report before 12 June.

| County/region | Confirmed cases | Reported cases 13 to 19 June 1992 |
|---|---|---|
| *England* | | |
| Avon | 18 | 13 |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | 1 |
| Berkshire | 4 | 3 |
| Buckinghamshire | 10 | 4 |
| Cambridge | 3 | 0 |
| Cheshire | 31 | 29 |
| Cleveland | 1 | 1 |
| Cornwall | 89 | 30 |
| Cumbria | 54 | 19 |
| Derbyshire | 13 | 19 |
| Devon | 110 | 60 |
| Dorset | 90 | 22 |
| Durham | 8 | 2 |
| Essex | 4 | 2 |
| Gloucestershire | 9 | 14 |
| Hampshire | 19 | 12 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 6 | 9 |
| Hertfordshire | 3 | 0 |
| Humberside | 2 | 3 |
| Isle of Wight | 8 | 3 |
| Kent | 17 | 6 |
| Lancashire | 43 | 28 |
| Leicestershire | 11 | 8 |
| Lincolnshire | 7 | 8 |
| London | 1 | 1 |
| Manchester | 1 | 0 |
| Merseyside | 0 | 1 |
| Norfolk | 25 | 18 |
| Northamptonshire | 3 | 8 |
| Northumberland | 15 | 6 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1 | 3 |
| Oxfordshire | 18 | 9 |
| Shropshire | 35 | 17 |
| Somerset | 91 | 53 |
| Staffordshire | 52 | 29 |
| Suffolk | 12 | 13 |
| Surrey | 9 | 5 |
| Sussex East | 16 | 5 |
| Sussex West | 18 | 15 |
| Tyne and Wear | 0 | 0 |
| Warwickshire | 7 | 7 |
| West Midlands | 1 | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 43 | 36 |
| Yorkshire North | 52 | 23 |
| Yorkshire South | 2 | 3 |
| Yorkshire West | 7 | 2 |
| *Wales* | | |
| Clwyd | 22 | 5 |
| Dyfed | 12 | 39 |
| Glamorgan Mid | 0 | 0 |
| Glamorgan South | 2 | 1 |
| Glamorgan West | 0 | 1 |
| Gwent | 2 | 4 |
| Gwynedd | 3 | 4 |
| Powys | 6 | 10 |
| *Scotland* | | |
| Borders | 1 | 0 |
| Central | 0 | 3 |
| Dumfries | 22 | 13 |
| Fife | 3 | 0 |
| Grampian | 9 | 3 |
| Highland | 0 | 1 |
| Lothian | 1 | 0 |
| Orkney | 0 | 0 |
| Shetland | 0 | 0 |
| Strathclyde | 16 | 15 |
| Tayside | 4 | 2 |
| Western Isles | 0 | 0 |
| *Northern Ireland* | | |
| Antrim | 0 | 1 |
| Armagh | 0 | 1 |
| Down | 1 | 5 |
| Fermanagh | 0 | 1 |
| Londonderry | 0 | 1 |
| Tyrone | 1 | 1 |

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee has met each year since its establishment.

**Mr. Gummer:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, at column *573*.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the countries which are refusing to import cattle from the United Kingdom due to concern over BSE; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the countries which are refusing to import milk and milk products from the United Kingdom due to concerns over BSE; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the countries which are refusing to import boneless beef from the United Kingdom because of concerns over BSE; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The information is as follows:

*Cattle*

Algeria
Argentina
Australia
Austria
Brazil
Canada
Chile
Finland
Hungary
Iran
Israel
Japan
Jordan
Malaysia (state of Sarawak only)
New Zealand
Russia
Saudi Arabia
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
USA
Uruguay

*Boneless Beef*

Algeria
Barbados
Dominica
Egypt
Grenada
Guyana
Jamaica
Japan
Libya
Malaysia (state of Sarawak only)
Montserrat
Philippines
St. Kitts
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Saudi Arabia
Syria
Taiwan
United Arab Emirates

*Milk and Milk Products*

Libya
Sweden[1]
Syria

[1] Sweden bans the importation from the United Kingdom of bovine milk products for consumption by farm animals. Milk for human consumption may continue.

*Notes:*

In addition, cattle over six months of age may not be sent to other member states unless imported in the United Kingdom after 18 July 1988.

Many of these countries are members of the worldwide veterinary organisation, the Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE). The OIE general assembly recently unanimously endorsed advice that, subject to certain conditions, trade with the United Kingdom in these products is safe. We will be pressing these countries—along with the non-OIE members—to accept these conditions so that trade in these products may resume.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date each of the individuals represented on the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee were appointed; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** All the members of the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee were appointed in April 1990, except for Professor Richard Barlow and Mr. David Pepper, who were added in September 1990.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times the consultative committee on research into spongiform encephalopathies has met each year since its establishment.

**Mr. Gummer:** The consultative committee on research into spongiform encephalopathies met on three occasions in 1989 before it was reconstituted as the spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of felines confirmed as having spongiform encephalopathy in each of the following age ranges: *(a)* below 12 months, *(b)* one to two years, *(c)* two to three years, *(d)* three to four years, *(e)* four to five years and *(f)* over five years; and what information he has on the likely cause of transmission.

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is as follows up to 26 June 1992:

| *Age* | *Number of felines with spongiform encephalopathy* |
|---|---|
| Less than 12 months | 0 |
| One year to two years | 1 |
| Two years to three years | 1 |
| Three years to four years | 3 |
| Five years and over | 21 |
| Age not known | 1 |

Insufficient cases of FSE have yet been identified to enable any conclusions about the epidemiology of the condition, or the source of infection, to be drawn. Information is, however, being collected about each confirmed case.

## British Beef

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the countries which ban the import of British beef.

**Mr. Soames:** These countries are as follows:

Algeria
Argentina
Barbados
Brazil
Chile
China
Dominica
Egypt
Grenada
Guyana
Iran
Jamaica
Japan
Libya
Montserrat
Philippines
Sarawak
St. Kitts
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Saudi Arabia
Sultanate of Oman
Syria

Taiwan
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates

**Bovine Offal**

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the legislation relating to the prohibition of the export of animal protein material derived from specified bovine offals; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what restrictions he has imposed on the export of cattle offal from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The exportation of the specified bovine offals and protein derived from them from Great Britain to other member states of the Europen Community and to third countries is banned under the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Order 1991 and the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991.

**Cattle (Lameness)**

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number and percentage of *(a)* dairy cattle and *(b)* beef cattle requiring to be destroyed due to acute lameness in each year since 1982.

**Mr. Soames:** This information is not collected.

## TRANSPORT

**Radioactive Materials**

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to collect centrally information on the movement of radioactive materials for reprocessing by road, rail, sea and air in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Norris:** I have no plans to do so.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the compilation of the International Atomic Energy Agency database on the movement of radioactive materials for reprocessing in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Norris:** Information was supplied by my Department to the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1991 in response to an IAEA request for certain details for its database on shipments of radioactive material. The information related to total shipments of irradiated fuel, non-irradiated fuel, uranium from reprocessing and wastes for the year 1990.

**Network SouthEast**

**Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total level of investment by British Rail since 1988 in Network SouthEast.

**Mr. Freeman:** In the five financial years from 1987-88 to 1991-92, Network SouthEast invested about £1780 million at 1991-92 prices.

**Travellers' Vehicles**

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements are made to ensure that the vehicles operated by travelling people are *(a)* MOT tested and *(b)* properly insured; how many prosecutions in each of these respects have taken place over the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The arrangements for ensuring compliance with the law on vehicle testing and insurance are the same for all vehicle users. It is an offence to use a vehicle without a current test certificate and valid insurance, and the police can bring prosecutions. The vehicle inspectorate checked the roadworthiness of 92 large non-public service vehicle passenger-carrying vehicles, most of which will not have been used by travelling people, at roadside spot checks in 1991-92. The inspectorate's policy is to prohibit unroadworthy vehicles rather than to prosecute. The 92 checks resulted in four prohibitions. The power to prohibit vehicles in a dangerous condition was extended to the police by the Road Traffic Act 1991, which was commenced on 1 July this year.

**British Rail Investment**

**Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total level of planned investment by British Rail in the latest year for which figures are available.

**Mr. Freeman:** British Rail invested a total of £1,005 million in 1991-92; this was the highest level for 30 years. British Rail's investment ceiling for 1992-93 is currently set at £983 million for the existing railway and £755 million for the new railway. The combined ceiling for both existing and new railways is therefore set at £1,738 million.

**Transpennine Study**

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when the conclusions of the transpennine study will be published; and if he will give reasons for the postponement in publication;

(2) what consideration is being given to the extension of the M65 eastwards as part of the transpennine study.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on Monday 29 June at column *391*, and to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on Tuesday 9 June at column *114*.

The transpennine study considered options for improving transport links in a number of corridors within a wide study area, which included the M65-A56-A59-A65-A660 corridor. The study covered a range of complex issues and our consideration of the consultants' findings has taken longer than expected.

**Thames Road Bridges**

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the road bridges across the Thames within the area of greater London and indicate which of them are, or will be, subject to closure and restriction because of maintenance; and how many are subject to width restrictions affecting traffic flow.

**Mr. Norris:** The following bridges carry roads across the Thames in the greater London area: Tower bridge,

London bridge, Southwark bridge, Blackfriars bridge, Waterloo bridge, Westminster bridge, Lambeth bridge, Vauxhall bridge, Chelsea bridge, Albert bridge, Battersea bridge, Wandsworth bridge, Putney bridge, Hammersmith bridge, Chiswick bridge, Kew bridge, Twickenham bridge, Richmond bridge, Kingston bridge and Hampton bridge. Chiswick, Kew and Richmond bridges carry trunk roads. Local highway authorities are responsible for all other structures.

I am aware that the following restrictions currently apply: Tower bridge, 17 tonnes weight; Westminster bridge, 7·5 tonnes weight; Albert bridge, 2·1 m width—temporary—two tonnes weight; Battersea bridge, 2·5 m width; and Hammersmith bridge, three tonnes weight.

Proposals to restrict bridges that carry or connect designated roads are subject to the prior approval of the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 1985. Under these powers my Department can ensure that restrictions on structures that affect traffic flow are essential and are imposed for the minimum time necessary.

### Traffic Director for London

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the duties and functions of the Traffic Director for London.

**Mr. Norris:** The duties and functions of the Traffic Director for London are set out in part II of the Road Traffic Act 1991. They include responsibility for co-ordinating the introduction and maintenance of traffic management measures taken by highway authorities in relation to priority routes established under the Road Traffic Act 1991, and for monitoring the operation of those measures. Specific functions include the preparation of a network plan for the design and operation of priority routes in London, giving approval to local plans for priority routes prepared by London highway authorities and preparing local plans himself for trunk roads in London.

### Port of London Authority

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who decides and authorises increases in the salary of the members of the board of the Port of London authority.

**Mr. Norris:** Under the provisions of the Port of London Act 1968, the authority itself determines the board members' remuneration.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the salary of each member of the board of the Port of London authority for the past five years.

**Mr. Norris:** Information about board members' remuneration is included in the annual reports of the Port of London authority which are placed in the Library.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who appoints members of the board of the Port of London authority; when the existing members were appointed; and when each member is due to retire or be reappointed.

**Mr. Norris:** The Secretary of State for Transport appoints the chairman and non-executive members of the Port of London authority for terms of three years or until the end of the year when they reach the age of 70. Their terms expire as follows, at the end of the year referred to: Sir Brian Kellett, chairman, 1992; Mr. R. G. Crawford 1993; Capt. P. M. Edge 1994; Mr. I. F. Halliday 1992; Mr. C. W. Jonas 1993; Mr. J. H. Kelly 1993; Mr. A. J. Macintosh 1994; Mr. A. P. Ravenscroft 1994; Sir Brian Shaw 1994. Two executives have been appointed to the board by the authority.

### Industrial Vehicles

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by type the vehicles used by *(a)* the construction or *(b)* agriculture industry where drivers using them on the public highway cannot be prosecuted for traffic offences, not being deemed a road vehicle under the current legislation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The main bad driving offences under sections 1, 2, 3, 3A and 4 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 now apply to all mechanically propelled vehicles. Various other road traffic offences apply to "motor vehicles", which are mechanically propelled vehicles intended or adapted for use on roads. Whether a particular vehicle is so intended or adapted depends on the facts in that case.

### Fuel Efficiency

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to set mandatory minimum fuel efficiency standards for vehicles.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 3 June, *Official Report*, volume 208, column *522*.

### Public Service Vehicles

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department holds, and at what level of regional disaggregation, regarding the failure rates of public service vehicles.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The Department's vehicle inspectorate holds complete information about vehicle testing, includng the percentage failure rates for public service vehicles at initial annual tests and retests and the most common failure items. Information on a national basis is published in the inspectorate's annual report. Regional information is held by its 54 district offices, which can further break the information down for individual testing stations.

### Speed Limiters

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce legislation to make it mandatory for heavy goods vehicles to be fitted with speed limiters.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Regulations have been made requiring the fitment of speed limiters to heavy goods vehicles. New goods vehicles over 7·7 tonnes gross weight must have speed limiters from 1 August this year. Articulated and certain drawbar goods vehicles over 16 tonnes gross weight first used on or after 1 January 1989 will need to be fitted by 1 August 1993.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations the Minister of State for Public Transport has received from the chairman of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority about the stated intention to take powers to enforce the privatisation of all remainining municipal bus companies; if he will be meeting representatives of the PTA; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** I am in correspondence with the chairman of Greater Manchester passenger transport authority confirming our commitment to privatise the remaining local authority-owned bus companies. I shall be happy to have an early meeting with the PTA about the future ownership of Greater Manchester Buses Ltd. and our consultant's report on the possibilities of splitting that company. My office is making the necessary arrangements.

### Motorway Intersections

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway intersections, where two motorways join, do not have full four-way access.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Twenty motorway to motorway junctions in England do not have full four-way access.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why it was decided not to construct a full four-way access junction where the A1(M) joins the A66(M) at Darlington; what plans he has to initiate the construction of a full four-way access junction at this point; and what estimate he has made of the cost.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The A1(M)—A66(M) interchange at Darlington was opened to traffic in May 1965 and its layout was designed to cater for the then existing and predicted further traffic movements.

A study of the A1(M) between Barton and Birtley is currently being undertaken to assess the longer-term requirements of this section of motorway. An assessment of this interchange and others will be undertaken as part of the study which will be completed in the spring of 1993.

### Road and Rail Infrastructure

**Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to ensure that road and rail infrastructure investments are being appraised on a comparable basis.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Department of Transport published last January a paper on investment appraisal in road and rail transport, which attracted helpful comments from many quarters. Many of these comments expressed concern about the relative roles of cost-benefit analysis and of financial analysis, and in particular the view that cost-benefit analysis should be more widely used in the appraisal of all transport infrastructure.

Different forms of transport should be able to compete on fair terms. This should be reflected in the criteria for Government grants and investment rules. It also follows that users of transport should as far as possible pay the full cost of the services they use. Although it is efficient to allow road congestion relief and other external benefits to be taken into account in the pricing of urban public transport, the benefits to public transport users themselves should be met as far as possible through fares.

If a new public transport investment cannot pay its way after counting both revenues and external benefits, the case for it is generally very weak. The availability of finance will remain a major consideration for any transport investment, be it in road or rail. So I see no reason for any change to the current grant rules. But benefits to users which cannot be recovered in fares can be relevant in, for instance, considering relative priorities between competing projects. I have therefore asked officials to develop further guidance on the use of cost-benefit analysis in urban transport appraisal.

### Regional Offices (Inquiries)

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent changes he has made in the arrangements regarding the handling of constituency inquiries by hon. Members which are addressed to regional offices of his Department; if he will publish the arrangements; what assessment he has made of the time taken to reply to *(a)* such an inquiry and *(b)* a similar inquiry from a member of the public; if he will review the arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** We have made no recent changes in the arrangements for handling constituency inquiries by hon. Members to our regional offices. We continue to require these to be replied to promptly and fully; the same requirements apply to inquiries from members of the public. We have no plans to review the arrangements.

## DEFENCE

### Bullying

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will instigate a confidential inquiry into bullying in the Army; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No inquiry is necessary. The Army takes the most careful steps to prevent bullying and treats any cases which do occur very seriously. Since 1987, the number of substantiated cases of bullying in the Army has fallen from 31 a year to 11 in 1990 and six in 1991.

### Defence Research Agency

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what professional, security, copyright and financial terms staff of the Defence Research Agency may participate in the Link programmes or research programmes funded by the European Community.

**Mr. Aitken:** This is a matter for the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to reply directly to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what encouragement there is in the framework document or in other formal guidance to encourage personnel and technology transfer between the Defence Research Agency and civil research and development.

**Mr. Aitken:** As the Ministry of Defence's principal source of scientific and technical advice, the Defence Research Agency attaches high priority to co-operation with industry in meeting MOD's requirements. Within the context that MOD is its major customer, it can pursue profitable commercial outlets for its services and arrange personnel exchanges with other organisations.

### Defence Export Services Organisation

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the names and company of secondment of the head of the Defence Export Services Organisation and its international financial adviser.

**Mr. Aitken:** The head of Defence Export Services Organisation is Mr. Alan Thomas, on secondment from Raytheon. Mr. Miles Faulkener, the international financial adviser, was previously employed by Trafalgar House.

### Resettlement Training

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what advice and facilities such as telephones and stationery are provided for service personnel undergoing resettlement training to seek outside employment; and what arrangements are made for personnel to have access to newspapers and magazines which publish job vacancies;

(2) how many service personnel are currently undergoing resettlement training; in how many places such training is being undertaken; what types of training are offered; what are the minimum and maximum days of training offered; and what budget allocation has been made to pay for such resettlement training;

(3) what representations he has received about the current provision for resettlement training; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** All service personnel coming to the end of their careers are advised individually on how best to prepare themselves for civilian life. In addition, everyone who leaves after more than five years' service is entitled to a comprehensive resettlement package. This comprises:

Briefings on how to go about finding a new job, on specific second careers, on home purchase, on personal finance and on other aspects of civilian life.

The opportunity to spend some time on attachment to an employing organisation in order to gain civilian work experience.

A pre-release resettlement period of 28 days on full pay which can be used for any resettlement-related activity, including attendance at a wide range of training courses. These courses take place at the resettlement training centres at Aldershot and Catterick and at many other locations.

Assistance with job finding through the Services Employment Network, the Officers Association or the Regular Forces Employment Association.

About 19,500 sevice personnel will be entitled to this help during 1992-93, and most of them will take advantage of at least some of what is available. The total direct cost in 1992-93 will be about £4 million. As part of this process, personnel are encouraged to consult newspapers and magazines which publish job vacancies. In addition, the Service Employment Network of the Ministry of Defence publishes its own weekly "Resettlement Bulletin Vacancy Supplement" which contains details of specific jobs. It is not MOD policy to make telephones or stationery specifically available to those seeking jobs.

We are determined to ensure that the service we offer provides those leaving the armed forces with the best possible support, particularly at a time when a number of those leaving will have been made redundant. The package of measures that I have set out has therefore been revised thoroughly and enhanced in a number of ways. We are continuing to consult widely within the armed forces and with other organisations which provide resettlement services to ascertain what more might be done.

### Military Detention Centres

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what independent inspectorate exists for military detention centres in England; who appoints such inspectors; to whom they make their reports following their visits to military detention centres; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The two military detention centres at the royal naval detention quarters, Portsmouth, and military corrective training centre, Colchester, are inspected at least twice a year by an independent board of visitors. Members of the board are appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence and make their reports to him. Statutory Instruments Nos. 723 and 724 of 1980 set out the composition and duties of the board relating to the military corrective training centre and royal naval detention quarters respectively.

Royal Air Force regional services detention rooms are not independently inspected, but are visited daily by the orderly officer and inspected regularly by the chain of command.

### Sea-Air Rescue

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is the Government's intention to continue the operation of air-sea rescue services at RAF Chivenor in north Devon; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A review of the provision of sea-air rescue by the armed forces is approaching its final stages. Final decisions on the structure and basing of the military SAR force have yet to be taken. I cannot, therefore, comment on the future of any individual military SAR flight.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Claim Processing Times

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the Government's target for the length of time to process reviews of claims for *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance, *(c)* attendance allowance on grounds of terminal illness, *(d)* disability living allowance and *(e)* disability living allowance including a claim for the highest rate of care component on grounds of terminal illness; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of mobility and disability living allowance are a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if sufficient officers have been employed during the last six months to handle reviews of claims for attendance allowance in order to meet the Government's targets for processing reviews; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

## Residential Homes

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for the shortfall in income support payments by comparison with fees charged in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes for the elderly or disabled, on a national, regional and local basis.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is not available. Data are collected on a sample basis which precludes the provision of reliable estimates. Contemporary information is not collected on fees.

## Income Support

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of raising the income support personal allowance for home owners aged *(a)* 21, *(b)* 22, *(c)* 23 and *(d)* 24 years, respectively, to the rate appropriate to persons aged 25 years and over.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is given in the table.

| *Benefit* | *Age 21+* | *Age 22+* | *Age 23+* | *Age 24* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income support | 5 | [1] | [1] | [1] |
| Community charge | [1] | [1] | [1] | [1] |
| Housing benefit | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 5 | [1] | [1] | [1] |

[1] Denotes a cost of less than £2·5 million.

*Notes:*

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
2. "Home owners" are defined as owner occupiers with a mortgage still outstanding.
3. The reply shows the cost of making the increases for the age group given at the top of the column and all those up to, but not including, age 25.

*Sources:*—1987-88 family expenditure survey and 1990 annual statistical inquiry.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of raising the income support personal allowance for recipients of housing benefit aged *(a)* 21, *(b)* 22, *(c)* 23 and *(d)* 24 years, respectively, to the rate appropriate to persons aged 25 years and over.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is given in the table.

| *Benefit* | *Age 21+* | *Age 22+* | *Age 23+* | *Age 24* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income support | 20 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
| Community charge benefit | [1] | [1] | [1] | 0 |
| Housing benefit | 15 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 40 | 25 | 20 | 10 |

[1] Denotes a cost of less than £2·5 million.

*Notes:*

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
2. The reply shows the cost of making the increases for the age group given at the top of the column and all those up to, but not including, age 25.

*Sources:*—1987-88 family expenditure survey and 1990 annual statistical inquiry.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *483*, if he will estimate the cost of raising the income support level for all persons aged *(a)* 21, *(b)* 22, *(c)* 23 and *(d)* 24 years, who are living away from home to the rate appropriate to persons aged 25 years and over.

**Mr. Burt:** The information is given in the table.

| *Benefit* | *Age 21+* | *Age 22+* | *Age 23+* | *Age 24* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income support | 55 | 40 | 25 | 10 |
| Community charge benefit | [1] | [1] | [1] | [1] |
| Housing benefit | 15 | 10 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | 70 | 55 | 30 | 10 |

[1] Denotes a cost of less than £2·5 million.

*Notes:*

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
2. Benefit units living away from home have been defined as those who are recorded in the FES as being head of households or who are living with a non-relative.
3. The reply shows the cost of making the increases for the age group given at the top of the column and all those up to, but not including, age 25.

*Sources:*—1987-88 family expenditure survey (FES).

## Social Fund

**Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what financial effect there has been from the recent review on the level of the social fund available in 1992-93 to those social security offices which serve people in the Sheffield, Attercliffe constituency.

**Mr. Scott:** Details of the allocations made to individual Benefits Agency districts are available in the Library.

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how long it is taking social fund inspectors to deal with an application for review of a decision made by a social fund officer; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** I am informed by the social fund commissioner that the average time taken is 38 working days. This figure includes the two weeks allowed for the applicant to comment on the papers which are sent to him. The majority of urgent cases are cleared within four working days.

# HOME DEPARTMENT

## Criminal Justice Consultative Council

**Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what programme of work the Criminal Justice Consultative Council adopted at its initial meeting on 15 January;

(2) on what dates the Criminal Justice Consultative Council has met; and when it will hold its next meeting.

**Mr. Jack:** The Criminal Justice Consultative Council met on 15 January and 9 April 1992. It will meet again on 6 July and 12 October. Subsequent meetings will take place quarterly.

At its initial meeting on 15 January, the council agreed to give early priority to monitoring the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, to the pre-trial issues initiative and to the establishment of area criminal justice liaison committees. Additionally, the council has agreed to

receive papers at forthcoming meetings on prisoners awaiting trial, on section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, on mode of trial issues, on the crime preventive aspects of the criminal justice system and on its own future reporting arrangements.

### Racial Crimes

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number of complaints that have been made to the Plumstead/Thamesmead police from white victims of racially motivated crimes in 1990, 1991 and to date in 1992; how many of the complaints were about crimes of violence; how many were investigated; how many were against named suspects; how many led to charges being brought; and how many led to convictions;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number of complaints that have been made to the Plumstead/Thamesmead police from black or ethnic minority victims of racially motivated crimes in 1990, 1991 and to date in 1992; how many of the complaints were about crimes of violence; how many were investigated; how many were against named suspects; how many led to charges being brought; how many led to convictions; and how many such complaints about crimes of violence were made in 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The publication of detailed statistics of this kind is a matter for chief officers. I have referred these questions to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, and I understand that he will be writing to the hon. Member.

### Wolds Private Prison

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoner custody officers employed by Group 4 at the Wolds private prison are from an ethnic minority background.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** None.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff have been assaulted at the Wolds private prison since it opened in April.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** None.

### Access Requests

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many subject access requests were made under the Data Protection Act 1984 to the police national computer last year; and what proportion were to the criminal names index.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** There were 18,293 police national computer subject access requests in 1991. Almost all were in respect of the criminal names index.

### Summer Solstice

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the total cost of extra police activity caused by the various manifestations to celebrate the 1992 summer solstice in the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire, Gloucester, Avon, Dorset, Somerset and Devon.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Available estimates from the forces concerned for the additional costs of policing amount to £267,000.

### Clamping and Towing-away Regulations

**Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue a leaflet for distribution to overseas motorists arriving at United Kingdom ports of entry, indicating the clamping and towing-away regulations which apply in the major cities of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Information on the enforcement of parking restrictions by police clampings and removals is available to foreign visitors in the booklet "On the Road in Great Britain" produced by the Department of Transport. The booklet is generally available at ports of entry.

### Police (Inquiry)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer on 30 June, *Official Report*, column *520*, (1) why he has decided not to include the Port of Tilbury, London police within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(2) why he has decided not to include the unregistered appointment of constables by miscellaneous authorities and bodies within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(3) why he has decided not to include the police appointed under the provisions of the Harbour, Docks, Piers Clauses Act 1847 within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decisions;

(4) why he has decided not to include the Ministry of Defence police within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(5) why he has decided not to include the various parks police appointed by local authorities within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(6) why he has decided not to include the Atomic Energy Authority police within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(7) why he has decided not to include the royal parks constabulary within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision;

(8) why he has decided not to include the British Transport police within the scope of his proposed inquiry into the role of the police officer; and if he will reconsider his decision.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has concluded that it would not be right to extend the inquiry's terms of reference to cover these forces. To do so would add considerably to the inquiry's work and would make it impossible for a report to be prepared in the time scale proposed.

## Immigration

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from hon. Members during *(a)* the first quarter of 1991 and *(b)* the first quarter of 1992 to delay the removal of passengers refused entry at British ports of entry; and for both periods, how many representations resulted in (i) the delay of the passenger's removal for up to a week, (ii) the delay of the passenger's removal for more than a week and (iii) reversal of the immigration officer's decision.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not available centrally.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many wives and dependent children applying for entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent in each quarter since January 1991 were refused *(a)* on first application and *(b)* on second or subsequent application.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is given in the table. Separate information on first-time applicants and re-applicants is not available centrally.

*Wives and children refused[1] entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent*
*Number of persons*

| | Refused | |
|---|---|---|
| | *Wives* | *Children* |
| *1991* | | |
| 1st quarter | 170 | 170 |
| 2nd quarter | 110 | 90 |
| 3rd quarter | 200 | 170 |
| 4th quarter | 180 | 160 |
| *1992* | | |
| 1st quarter | 220 | 160 |

[1] These refusals are by an entry clearance officer. Some of these will be overturned on appeal.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for settlement by wives and children in *(a)* Dhaka and *(b)* Islamabad were (i) received, (ii) granted, (iii) refused, (iv) deferred at first interview, (v) lapsed and (vi) outstanding and awaiting first interview for each quarter since the beginning of 1991.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is given in the table. Data on deferrals was discontinued from May 1990.

*Wives and children applying for entry clearance in the United Kingdom[1]*

| *Post* | *Newly received[2]* | *Granted[3]* | *Applications Refused initially[4]* | *Withdrawn or lapsed[5]* | *Awaiting first interview at end of quarter* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dhaka—1991 | | | | | |
| 1st quarter | 640 | 940 | 220 | 50 | 1,300 |
| 2nd quarter | 920 | 730 | 120 | 80 | 1,400 |
| 3rd quarter | 920 | 830 | 130 | 60 | 1,500 |
| 4th quarter | 830 | 300 | 100 | 50 | 1,500 |
| 1992 | | | | | |
| 1st quarter | 680 | 610 | 180 | 30 | 1,300 |
| Islamabad—1991 | | | | | |
| 1st quarter | 980 | 1,240 | 160 | 60 | 1,300 |
| 2nd quarter | 810 | 870 | 70 | 40 | 940 |
| 3rd quarter | 940 | 970 | 210 | 70 | 500 |
| 4th quarter | 990 | 1,030 | 170 | 50 | 1,200 |
| 1992 | | | | | |
| 1st quarter | 1,020 | 1,060 | 130 | 70 | 660 |

[1] Including all persons applying for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the United Kingdom.
[2] Data include some double counting in respect of applications recorded initially for entry clearance and then subsequently for a certificate of entitlement.
[3] Granted initially or on appeal.
[4] Since about the end of 1989, settlement applications have been refused in the circumstances where previously they would have been lapsed.
*Note:* Data on deferrals was discontinued from May 1990.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken by his Department to investigate cases referred from overseas posts in order to assess whether the maintenance and accommodation requirements of the immigration rules have been met.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not available. Staff are, however, instructed to give priority to cases referred by overseas posts for decision or for enquiries to be made. If the hon. Member is concerned about the time taken to deal with any particular case, I should be happy to look into it.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications from over-age reapplicants from the Indian sub-continent seeking to join a sponsor settled in the United Kingdom have been *(a)* made, *(b)* deferred, *(c)* refused and *(d)* granted in each year since 1986, to the first quarter of 1992; and how many such reapplicants in each category had undergone successful DNA tests.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The available information is that a total of 701 applications from over-age reapplicants in the Indian sub-continent to join parents in the United Kingdom have been decided under the terms of the concession announced by my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary on 14 June 1989 at columns *461-62*. All of these cases involved over-age reapplicants who had established relationships by means of deoxyribonucleic

acid (DNA) evidence but did not quality for admission under the immigration rules. Entry clearance has been authorised in 126 of these cases and refused in 575.

## Police (War Crimes)

**Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers, in what ranks, are currently employed in police work flowing from the War Crimes Act 1991.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is shown in the table:

*Number of police officers*

| *Rank* | *England and Wales* | *Scotland* |
|---|---|---|
| Detective Chief Superintendent | 1 | — |
| Detective Chief Inspector | 1 | — |
| Detective Inspector | 3 | 1 |
| Detective Sergeant | 1 | 1 |
| Detective Constable | 3 | 1 |
| Police Constable | 2 | — |
| Total | 11 | 3 |

# HEALTH

## 999 Emergency Centres

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had concerning the future number and distribution of 999 emergency centres.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department obtained the views of regional ambulance officers in supporting an Office of Telecommunications recommendation for the establishment of a call handling agency for 999 calls. Advice to OFTEL on the number and location of call handling centres will be provided by independent consultants.

## Research Units

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions her Department has had with *(a)* the Association of University Teachers, *(b)* the Management, Science and Finance Union, *(c)* the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, *(d)* the Association of Department of Health Funded Research Workers, *(e)* the National and Local Government Officers Association and *(f)* any other relevant organisations, about the contractual conditions of staff it funds through research units and research project grants;

(2) what progress her Department is making in its review of research units; and when it will announce its conclusions about whether it will continue to fund research units;

(3) if she will list the research units funded by her Department and give for each *(a)* the numbers of core staff funded by her Department in post on 1 June, *(b)* the numbers of project staff funded by her Department in post on 1 June, *(c)* the date on which the unit's contract expires and *(d)* when the unit was last reviewed by the Director of Research and Development or his predecessor the Chief Scientist, together with the decisions made about future funding of the unit in the light of this review.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The director of research and development, Professor Michael Peckham, last year commissioned an independent review of the 13 research units currently funded by the Department. The details requested on each of these units are shown in the table.

The final report of the review team has just been received. We shall consider carefully the report's conclusions and recommendations and will make the report available in due course. A copy will be placed in the Library. An announcement will be made in the autumn.

| *Unit* | *Number of core staff* | *Number of project staff* | *Date contract ends* | *Month of last chief scientist visit* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cancer Screening Evaluation Unit | 6·0 | 4·0 | 30 June 1994 | September 1990 |
| Centre for Health Economics | 4·5 | 13·5 | 30 September 1995 | December 1990 |
| Centre for Primary Care Research | 5·0 | 0·5 | 31 December 1993 | December 1989 |
| Childhood Cancer Research Group | 11·0 | 3·0 | 31 August 1994 | October 1991 |
| Clinical Operational Research Unit | 6·0 | 0·0 | 30 September 1993 | October 1987 |
| Dartington Social Research Unit | 4·0 | 6·0 | 31 March 1994 | May 1990 |
| Medical Care Research Unit | 7·5 | 17·0 | 31 March 1995 | April 1988 |
| National Institute for Social Work | 6·0 | 7·0 | 31 December 1992 | March 1986 |
| National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit | 9·5 | 14·0 | 31 March 1994 | May 1989 |
| Personal Social Services Research Unit | 6·0 | 15·0 | 30 September 1994 | June 1989 |
| Social Policy Research Unit | 7·0 | 7·0 | 31 March 1994 | November 1989 |
| Thomas Coram Research Unit | 5·0 | 7·5 | 31 March 1994 | November 1988 |
| Social Medicine and Health Services Research Unit | 23·0 | 16·0 | 31 March 1994 | March 1989 |

## Agencies

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the salary range of the chief executive of each of his Department's executive agencies, including any performance-related elements, dividends and bonuses; what plans she has to increase or decrease these in the current year; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The chief executive of the National Health Service Estate Management and Health Building Agency NHS Estates receives a salary of £55,000 plus an annual non-pensionable performance-related bonus of up to £7,000. The chief executive of the Medicine Control Agency (MCA) receives a salary of £65,993 plus an annual non-pensionable performance-related bonus of up to £13,150. There are no other dividends or bonuses available.

The chief executive's salaries will be reviewed in line with the percentage increase for civil service grade 3s, as recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body. No final decision has yet been made with regard to the latest annual performance-related bonus.

## Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans her Department has to encourage greater awareness amongst health care professionals as to the symptoms and treatment of reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome.

**Mr. Yeo:** In common with other medical conditions, education on the symptoms and treatment of reflex sympathetic dystrophy syndrome is a matter for professional bodies such as the royal colleges and nurse training schools.

## Abortion

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many and which registered abortion clinics have, since 3 July 1991, applied for a licence to provide early medical abortion services.

**Mr. Sackville:** The following 16 applications have been received and all have been approved.

*Places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 for medical termination of early pregnancy as at 1 July 1992*

AMI Alexandra Hospital
Mill Lane
Cheadle
Cheshire
SK8 2PX

Blackdown Nursing Home
Old Milverton Lane
Blackdown
Leamington Spa
CV32 6RW

Calthorpe Nursing Home
4 Arthur Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 2UL

Danum Lodge Nursing Home
123 Thorne Road
Doncaster
DN2 5QB

Dean Park Nursing Home
23-25 Ophir Road
Bournemouth
BH8 8LS

Fallodon Private Nursing Home
4 Allerton Park
Leeds
LS7 4ND

Fairfield Nursing Home
88 Russell Road
Buckhurst Hill
Essex
IG9 5QB

Marie Stopes Nursing Home
10 Manstone Road
London
NW2 3XG

Merseyside Nursing Home
32 Parkfield Road
Liverpool
LI7 8UJ

Park View Clinic
87 Mattock Lane
Ealing
London
W5 5BJ

Raleigh Nursing Home
1A Raleigh Gardens
Brixton Hill
London
SW2 6AB

Robert Clinic
162 Station Road
Kings Norton
Birmingham
B30 1DB

Rosslyn Nursing Home
15-17 Rosslyn Road
East Twickenham
Middlesex
TW1 2AR

South Manchester Private Clinic
136 Chester Road
Hazel Grove
Stockport
SK7 6HE

St. Anns Hospital
St. Anns Road
London
N15 3TH

Wistons Nursing Home
138 Dyke Road
Brighton
Sussex
BN1 5PA

**Ms. Richardson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department is providing to registered abortion clinics and national health service hospitals which are offering early medical abortion services; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** Departmental guidance about day-care arrangements for medical termination of early pregnancy has been issued to places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967. In addition, the manufacturer's data sheet for the drug mifegyne—mifepristone, which is known as RU 486—and its patient information leaflet fully explain the procedure for this medical method of termination of pregnancy up to nine weeks—63 days—gestation. Both the manufacturer's data sheet and the patient information leaflet are approved by the Medicines Control Agency as part of the licensing procedure. Where abortion is to be performed, the decision whether to use a medical method is one for the doctor and woman concerned.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her inspectors last inspected *(a)* the Raleigh nursing home and *(b)* the Marie Stopes nursing home; how many times each have been inspected since they were approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967; and what was their date of approval under that section.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Raleigh and Marie Stopes nursing homes were last visited in May 1992 and November 1991 respectively. The former was first approved in March 1973 and the latter in November 1981. Since those dates at least two visits a year have been made to each place.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account her Department takes of any financial

interest involved when private clinics conduct abortions referred by or certified in whole or in part, by doctors working for the clinic or any advice centre financially linked to the clinic.

**Mr. Sackville:** All places approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 are required by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to notify her of any financial arrangements between them and any medical practitioner, pregnancy advice bureau or referral agency, and to report any changes to existing financial arrangements. This is one of the matters examined in the course of unannounced visits by the Department's officers.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer on 29 June, *Official Report*, column *446*, if she will now give the names of directors and names of companies owning or managing private abortion clinics together with the names of any parent subsidiary companies.

**Mr. Sackville:** The hon. Member can obtain the published information from Companies house.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of abortions performed at the Raleigh nursing home and the Marie Stopes nursing home were certified by doctors working at either nursing home or the Well Woman centre, Marie Stopes house.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not held by the Department.

## Dentistry

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's long-term forecast of the number of dentists in the general dental service who will be under contract to the national health service in the United Kingdom in 1995 and the year 2000, respectively.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** A joint Health Departments and British Dental Association review of dental manpower needs is currently in progress. It will consider the number of dentists that will be needed over the next 40 years.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the most and least favourable ratio of general dental practitioners to population in respect of particular family health service authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, respectively.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information for England is as follows: lowest dentist-to-population ratio, Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster family health service authority —1:1,360; highest ratio, Lincolnshire FHSA—1:4,810. The information relating to Wales and Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland.

## Broadgreen NHS Trust

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many emergency transfers under extra-contractual arrangements have been requested between Broadgreen NHS trust accident and emergency department and neighbouring health authorities since the NHS trust was established in April 1991; and how many have taken place.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. P. Kennedy, chairman of the Broadgreen hospital NHS trust, for details.

## Marriages (Immigration Purposes)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports have been made by marriage registrars and from which registration areas to the Registrar General, that marriages are suspected to be solely for immigration purposes, in each year from 1990 to the latest convenient date; and in how many of these instances information has been passed on to the Home Office.

**Mr. Sackville:** The available information is shown in the table. During the first six months of this year superintendent registrars reported 78 cases to the registrar general where they suspected that a proposed marriage of a person from abroad had been arranged for the sole purpose of evading statutory immigration controls.

*Reports received by the Registrar General during the period 1 January 1992 to 30 June 1992*

| *Registration* | *Number of Reports* |
|---|---|
| Bracknell | 1 |
| Brent | 16 |
| Cambridge | 1 |
| Colwyn | 1 |
| Durham Northern | 1 |
| Ealing | 2 |
| Hammersmith | 2 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 3 |
| Lambeth | 1 |
| Leicestershire Central | 1 |
| Lewisham | 21 |
| Merton | 5 |
| Oldham | 1 |
| Oxford | 2 |
| Portsmouth | 1 |
| Sheffield | 1 |
| Southwark | 5 |
| Stockport | 1 |
| Wandsworth | 1 |
| Westminster | 11 |
| TOTAL | 78 |

Information in respect of 18 such cases was passed on to the Home Office.

## Care Homes

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *65*, if she will supply a breakdown of the projected number of persons wanting care on an annual basis after April 1993 in the following categories *(a)* elderly, *(b)* physically handicapped, *(c)* mentally ill and *(d)* learning disabled.

**Mr. Yeo** *[holding answer 29 June 1992]:* It is not possible to provide the precise figures but about 15 per cent. of people in long-term residential or nursing home care who are supported by social security benefits are under 65.

## Adoption

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy on intercountry adoption.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government's approach to intercountry adoption is influenced by the provisions of the 1986 United Nations declaration on social and legal principles relating to the protection and welfare of children, with special reference to foster placement and adoption, nationally and internationally. This provides that:

(a) intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of providing a family for a child who cannot be cared for in any suitable manner in his own country;

(b) in all matters relating to the placement of a child outside the care of the child's own parents, the best interests of the child should be the paramount consideration;

(c) safeguards and standards equivalent to those which apply in national adoption are to be applied in intercountry adoption to protect the welfare of the children concerned.

The Government's policy also has regard to article 21 of the 1989 United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which was ratified by the Government on 16 December 1991. This article relates specifically to intercountry adoption, endorsing those articles contained in the 1986 United Nations declaration and requiring contracting states to:

(a) ensure that the adoption of a child is authorised only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the adoption is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary;

(b) recognise that intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of child care, if the child cannot be placed in a foster or an adoptive family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin;

(c) ensure that the child concerned by intercountry adoption enjoys safeguards and standards equivalent to those existing in the case of national adoption;

(d) take all appropriate measures to ensure that, in intercountry adoption, the placement does not result in improper financial gain for those involved; and

(e) promote, where appropriate, the objectives of this article by concluding bilateral or multilateral arrangements or agreements, and endeavour, within this framework, to ensure that the placement of the child in another country is carried out by competent authorities or organs.

## SCOTLAND

### Housing Capital Receipts

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual value of housing capital receipts accrued by local authorities, and the number of sold properties this represents, in each year since 1981.

**Mr. Lang:** The table gives details of local authority housing capital receipts and the number of local authority houses sold in each year since 1981-82.

| | *Housing capital receipts £ million* | *Houses sales* |
|---|---|---|
| 1981-82 | 86·9 | 8,966 |
| 1982-83 | 132·9 | 12,183 |
| 1983-84 | 162·8 | 14,081 |
| 1984-85 | 155·3 | 11,835 |
| 1985-86 | 154·7 | 11,274 |
| 1986-87 | 141·4 | 11,324 |
| 1987-88 | 196·2 | 18,046 |
| 1988-89 | 288·9 | 25,642 |
| 1989-90 | 331·8 | 29,529 |
| 1990-91 | 296·6 | 23,460 |
| 1991-92 | 295·3 | 19,268 |

*Notes:*
1. Housing capital receipts are derived from the sale of houses, land and other assets held on local authority housing accounts and from the repayment of loans for house purchase and improvement.
2. House sales include the sales of houses to sitting tenants and the sale of vacant or tenanted houses to third parties.
3. The figures for 1991-92 are provisional.

### A75

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to bypass Springholm and Crocketford on the A75; and when he expects completion of the scheme.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are no schemes in the trunk road programme to bypass Springholm and Crocketford on the A75.

### Criminal Records

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the estimated net saving to his Department as a result of contracting out the back-record conversion of criminal record microfiche data; and how many records were involved;

(2) whether an in-house bid was invited for the task of the back-record conversion of criminal record microfiche data;

(3) whether the back record conversion of criminal record microfiche data has been completed; and to what company the task was contracted out.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Conversion of the Scottish collection of criminal records to the computerised record system now operated as a common police service at the Scottish Criminal Record Office was not the subject of a competitive tendering exercise. The task, completed in 1985, was carried out at Dunfermline police station by Scottish police officers and civilian support staff recruited by Fife regional council. Some 420,000 Scottish criminal records including some microfiche data were converted.

### Monofilament Gill Nets

**Mr. Onslow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies he has made of the effect of the ban on the carriage and use of monofilament gill nets in Scottish waters; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro:** The ban in Scottish waters was instituted in 1986 principally to protect salmon. The risk to salmon stocks remains a vital consideration, but the ban is being kept under review.

### Local Enterprise Companies

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(2) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for the provision of employment and training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference;

(3) if he will list for each local enterprise company the budget made available from his Department for the provision of youth training places for 1991-92 and 1992-93 *(a)* at current prices and *(b* at 1992-93 prices, indicating in both cases the percentage difference.

**Mr. Stewart:** The Scottish Office does not make budget allocations to local enterprise companies. The allocation of resources to the companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each local enterprise company the number of training weeks contracted for under (i) employment training and (ii) youth training *(a)* in 1991-92, *(b)* in 1992-93 and *(c)* the percentage difference.

**Mr. Stewart:** The number of training weeks contracted by each local enterprise company is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairman of these bodies to write to the hon. Member.

## Scottish Homes

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the average grant paid on properties under the scheme operated by Scottish Homes to enable the provision of housing at market rent.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* The average grant approval per unit has been £14,124 representing, on average, 36 per cent. of the total project cost.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many properties have been provided through Scottish Homes under the scheme to give grants for the provision of housing at market rents since its introduction.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* The provision of 264 units has been approved.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost of the scheme operated by Scottish Homes to give grants for the provision of housing at market rents since its introduction; and what plans he has to expand the scheme in the future.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* Since the scheme was introduced, Scottish Homes has approved grant of £3,728,623 for the provision of housing at market rent. This has generated £6,479,070 in private finance. Scottish Homes expects to spend £4·06 million on market rent schemes in 1992-93. Future expenditure will be for Scottish Homes to determine within the context of its annual expenditure programmes which is submitted to me for approval.

## Further Education

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many students there are under 19 years of age and currently, engaged in full-time further education in Scotland;

(2) how many *(a)* single parent students, *(b)* disabled students, *(c)* students over retirement age and *(d)* student couples with at least one dependent child there are who are currently engaged in full-time courses of *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* Information on parental or disability status of students is not available centrally. Information on the age of full-time students in Scotland in 1990-91 is given in the table:

*Full-time Students in Scotland in 1990-91 by age*

| *Age*[1] | *Higher Education* | *Further Education* |
|---|---|---|
| Under 19 | 18,619 | 18,227 |
| 19 years to retirement[2] | 78,185 | 19,612 |
| Over retirement age[2] | 40 | 84 |
| Total full-time | 96,844 | 37,923 |

[1] Age is taken at 31 December 1990.
[2] Retirement age is taken as 65 for men and 60 for women.

## Market Testing

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost so far of the market testing initiative in his Department since November 1991.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 July 1992):* An estimate of staff and other Departmental costs is not readily available. One consultancy study has been undertaken: the fee is covered by commercial confidentiality.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of savings in his Department as a result of the market testing programme.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* Estimated savings in the first full year resulting from market testing undertaken within the past five years are as follows:

| *Year* | *£* |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 1,081,000 |
| 1988-89 | 138,000 |
| 1989-90 | 357,000 |
| 1990-91 | 721,000 |
| 1991-92 | 646,779 |

Similar savings recur in each subsequent year.

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a date when he will announce the areas of work in his Department to be market tested; and whether all relevant information will be made publicly available.

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* The market testing programme for 1992-93 will be announced as soon as possible.

# NATIONAL FINANCE

## Corporaton Tax

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of public sector receipts was accounted for by corporation tax in each of the fiscal years 1985 to 1992; what proportion of those figures was attributable to foreign companies paying tax in the United Kingdom; and what proportion of public sector receipts he has forecast to arise from corporation tax in 1992-93.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The figures requested are given in the table. I regret that insufficient information is available to estimate the proportion of corporation tax receipts accounted for by foreign-owned companies.

*Corporation tax receipts[1] as percentage of general government receipts*

| *Year* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|
| 1985-86 | 7·1 |
| 1986-87 | 8·4 |
| 1987-88 | 9·0 |
| 1988-89 | 9·7 |
| 1989-90 | 10·4 |
| 1990-91 | 9·9 |
| 1991-92 | 8·3 |
| [2]1992-93 | 7·3 |

[1] including advance corporation tax
[2] FSBR forecast

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the levels of corporation tax or corresponding taxes in each EEC or Group of Seven country.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The current main tax rates on corporate income are given in the table.

| *Country* | *Main national corporate income tax rate Per cent.* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 39 | |
| Canada | 38 | a. Rate for Canadian manufacturing income is 33 per cent.; b. Less provincial tax credit of 10 per cent. c. Plus 3 per cent. surcharge on federal tax; d. Plus provincial corporate income tax (eg. Ontario: 14·5 per cent.) (13·5 per cent. on manufacturing income); e. Effective total (in Ontario: 43·34 per cent.) (37·19 per cent. on manufacturing income). |
| Denmark | 34 | The 34 per cent. rate is conditional on payment of the tax in two instalments during the income year; otherwise 38 per cent. |
| France | 34 | |
| Germany | 50 | a. 36 per cent. on distributed profits; b. Plus local trade tax on corporate income—average rate about 20 per cent.—deductible for federal tax; effective total: approximately 60 per cent. (49 per cent. on distributed profits). |
| Greece | 46 | Rates are 35 per cent. or 40 per cent. for certain manufacturing companies. |
| Ireland | 40 | 10 per cent. for manufacturing companies |
| Italy | 36 | Plus local corporate income tax at standard 16·2 per cent. rate, of which 75 per cent. is deductible for national tax, giving effective total of 47·8 per cent. |
| Japan | 37·5 | a. Plus 2·5 per cent. surcharge on tax over Y4 million; b. Plus local taxes on corporate income at varying rates; c. Effective total: approximately 52 per cent. |
| Luxembourg | 33 | a. Plus 1 per cent. surcharge for the unemployment fund; b. Plus local trade tax on corporate income at varying rates—typically 10 per cent.—deductible for national tax; c. Effective total: approximately 40 per cent. |
| Netherlands | 35 | |
| Portugal | 36 | Plus municipal surcharge—typically 10 per cent.—deductible for national tax, giving effective total of 38·3 per cent. |
| Spain | 35 | Plus 1·5 per cent. surcharge for the Chamber of Commerce, giving effective total of 35·525 per cent. |
| United Kingdom | 33 | |
| United States | 34 | a. Plus corporate income tax in most states (eg. 9·3 per cent. in California), deductible for federal tax; b. Effective total (in California): 40·13 per cent. |

In several of the above countries, lower tax rates apply to the income of small companies.

## Inheritance Tax (Exemptions)

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of landowners in each county in the United Kingdom who have benefited under the tax procedures by which tax liability is reduced on condition that there is an undertaking to manage and protect the land from development and allow reasonable public access.

**Mr. Dorrell:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 30 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *469-70*.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria his Department uses to assess the benefits of inheritance tax exemptions for granting access to works of art; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** In return for conditional exemption for works of art from inheritance tax, owners are required to give undertakings to keep the property permanently in the United Kingdom, preserve the property and provide reasonable public access to it. The exemption therefore makes a valuable contribution towards the maintenance of, and public enjoyment of, the national heritage.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people in Cumbria have benefited under the tax procedures by which tax liability is reduced on the condition that there is an undertaking to make works of art owned by them available for public access.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The information requested is not readily available.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer where tax exemption has been given to the inheritors of works of art, and public access is given, whether the owners are allowed to charge the public for access.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Where property is exhibited in a room open to the public or viewing is allowed by appointment, the owner may make a reasonable entry charge.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will place in the Library the annual reports submitted by landowners to the various heritage advisory agencies in England concerning the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will place in the Library the annual reports submitted by landowners to the various heritage advisory agencies in Scotland concerning the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will place in the Library the annual reports submitted by landowners to the various heritage advisory agencies in Wales concerning the monitoring of land conditionally exempted from inheritance tax in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 2 July 1991]:* No. Disclosure of the annual reports which are required to be submitted as part of the monitoring process to the various heritage advisory agencies by the owners of land which has been conditionally exempted from inheritance tax would breach the normal rules ensuring taxpayers' confidentiality.

### EC Economic and Finance Council

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

**Mr. Lamont** *[holding answer 2 July 1992]:* The Economic and Finance Council of the European Community met in Luxembourg on 29 June and I represented the United Kingdom.

Substantial progress was made on two directives important to the completion of the single market in financial services. Political agreement was reached on some of the most contentious points of the investment services directive. The two which caused most concern to member states were the direct access by banks to stock exchanges and market transparency. On the former issue, Belgium, France and Italy were granted a short transitional period during which they would not be required to grant banks direct access to their exchanges, while Greece, Portugal and Spain will have a longer transitional period with a report from the Commission on whether it should be extended. The agreement on market transparency recognises the need to avoid damaging existing market structures, in particular the United Kingdom's quote-driven market making system.

A political agreement on a common position was reached on the capital adequacy directive. Among the main outstanding points resolved to my satisfaction were minimum levels of initial capital, the recognition of partnership capital and comitology procedures. The treatment of commodities trading and index-linked and low coupon bonds was not finalised in the present directive, but will be the subject of new proposals from the Commission. It was agreed that the date of implementation of the directive would coincide with the—as yet undecided—date of implementation of the investment services directive.

In a discussion of indirect taxes, the Council returned to the presidency package covering the eight draft directives on rates and structures for VAT and excise goods, and the draft seventh VAT directive on second-hand goods, including works of art.

I restated the United Kingdom's position that it is not necessary for the completion of the single market to have in place a permanent legally binding EC-wide minimum standard rate of VAT. I did, however, indicate that I could accept a Commission proposal for a time limited minimum rate of 15 per cent. with provision for a review no later than 31 December 1996, and provided that it formed part of an overall agreement which included a satisfactory solution to the minimum rate for spirits and the definition of intermediate alcohol products.

The Commission's proposal would have no practical effect on the United Kingdom's current standard rate of 17·5 per cent. It would be subject to review before the end of 1996. Some other member states, however, expressed anxiety about what could happen at the time of the review.

The presidency proposed that the minimum excise duty rate for spirits should be 600 ecu per hectolitre of pure alcohol, and that member states with a current rate of duty not exceeding 1,000 ecu should not be able to reduce their rates. However it was not possible to reach agreement—some member states, concerned about cross-border shopping, were still seeking a minimum rate higher than 600 ecu, while I reiterated that I was not prepared to agree to a minimum rate for spirits that would force any member state to put up its duty on spirits.

On the structure of alcohol duties, I indicated that I was prepared to consider a text that allowed intermediate products below 15 per cent. alcohol by volume to be taxed at a reduced rate, which could be equal to the wine rate of duty. This was not acceptable to two member states.

There was no discussion on mineral oils or tobacco products.

There was no substantive discussion of the presidency's latest proposals on the seventh VAT directive, but I renewed the United Kingdom's reserve on the proposed treatment of imports of works of art.

These draft directives will now be discussed further under our presidency.

The Council also briefly considered the present state of negotiations on the taxation of road transport and the proposed directive on the taxation of interest and royalties. It was agreed that both issues should be remitted to working groups for further discussion.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### China

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the practice of forced abortion in China; what representations he has made to the Government of China regarding the practice; and what provisions exist under the

treaty with China on Hong Kong governing the extent to which citizens of Hong Kong may be subject to the laws of the Government of China regarding the number of children that each family may have when the government of Hong Kong passes to China.

**Mr. Goodlad:** In our contacts with the Chinese authorities, they have told us that forced abortion is not official policy. There are nevertheless many reports that such practices are condoned in more isolated areas. The joint declaration guarantees Hong Kong people the freedom to marry and the right to raise a family freely, and this guarantee is reiterated in the Basic Law which will become the constitution of Hong Kong on 1 July.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Chinese authorities about their use of labour camps and the case of Mr. Harry Wu, a Chinese citizen currently living in the United States of America.

**Mr. Goodlad:** We have made clear to the Chinese authorities on many occasions our deep concern about the widespread abuses of human rights in China. The Government continue to urge all states that have not yet ratified international instruments covering slavery, forced labour and similar practices, including China, to do so at the earliest opportunity. We have no plans to make representations about the specific case of Mr. Harry Wu.

## EFTA

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the agreements negotiated between the European Community and the European Free Trade Association since 1979.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been notified by the Commission of the European Communities of the following three agreements to which the European Community and all members of the European Free Trade Association are party:

convention on the simplification of formalities in trade in goods, signed at Interlaken 20 May 1987;

convention on a common transit procedure, signed at Interlaken 20 May 1987;

agreement laying down a Procedure for the exchange of information in the field of technical regulations signed at Brussels 19 December 1989.

The negotiations between the European Community and the member states of the European Free Trade Association on the establishment of the European economic area were concluded this year. The agreement was signed in Oporto on 2 May 1992 but has still to be ratified.

## Nuclear Proliferation

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he as to tackle the problem of nuclear proliferation.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Preventing nuclear proliferation is among our foreign policy priorities. We shall continue to work to extend and reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation regime, in particular through further accessions to the non-proliferation treaty and an indefinite extension of the treaty at the 1995 extension conference; a strengthened International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards regime; and stricter supplier controls on nuclear material and technology.

## Libya

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions Britain has applied to the United Nations sub-committee on sanctions against Libya, for permission to allow an air ambulance to be sent to Libya to collect British citizens who were in Libya; how long the whole process took on each occasion; what were the results of the requests and what ensuing action was taken; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The United Kingdom has submitted only one application to the United Nations sanctions committee (Libya) for permission to send an air ambulance to collect a British national. Approval in principle was given by members of the committee within 12 hours of the application being made. However, the patient recovered and evacuation was not necessary.

There is no need to make a statement.

## Mercenaries

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he proposes to ratify the United Nations international convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We did not sign the convention and therefore do not propose to ratify it. Implementation of the convention would require primary legislation. Following the consideration of the whole question by the Diplock committee, we decided not to introduce legislation on mercenaries. We still do not consider that the need for such legislation has been established.

## Iran

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of Iran over the executions of political dissidents and demonstrators following arrests made at demonstrations in Mashhad, Arak and other Iranian cities in April, May and June.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We continue to make clear to the Iranian Government our serious concern at their human rights record, both bilaterally and together with our EC partners. They can be in no doubt of our views.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what military equipment has been exported to Iran since 29 October 1985.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** No licensable defence equipment has been exported to Iran in breach of the guidelinies set out by the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 29 October 1985, which remain strictly enforced. It has been the consistent policy of this and previous Administrations not to comment on specific cases for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

## Cuba

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was Her Majesty's Government's position at the United Nations

Security Council on the request from Cuba for a special Security Council meeting to discuss the refusal of the United States of America to extradite two United States citizens involved in the bombing of a Cubana Airline plane in 1976; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** We raised no objection. The United Nations Security Council met on 21 May to consider the matter.

### Visas

**Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries require British passport holders of Indian, Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin to obtain visas while not requiring British passport holders in general to do so.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

### Radioactive Materials

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what medical or industrial radioactive materials are known to exist in *(a)* the British Virgin Islands, *(b)* Anguilla and Monserrat, *(c)* the Cayman islands, *(d)* the Falkland islands, *(e)* South Georgia and the South Sandwich islands and *(f)* the Turks and Caicos islands, respectively, that will be covered by the trilateral Euratom International Atomic Energy Agency-United Kingdom nuclear safeguards agreement pursuant to additional protocol No. 1 of the treaty of Tlatelolco—Com (92) 197 final—currently awaiting approval by the Council of Ministers and IAEA board of governors.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** None.

### Western Sahara

**Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the western Sahara referendum with the United Nations Secretary-General; and if he will urge him fully to deploy United Nations forces (MINURSO) in the area to implement sanctions against those violating the ceasefire and to intervene personally to end the current stalemate.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** There will be opportunities to discuss these issues with the United Nations Secretary-General during his present visit to London.

**Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to give a firm commitment to a free and fair referendum for the Sahrawi people.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We continue to give our full support to the United Nations Secretary-General's settlement plan, which provides for the holding of a United Nations-supervised referendum to enable the Sahrawi people to determine their own future.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what applications British Nuclear Fuels plc has made to his Department to conclude subsidiary arrangements under the provisions of article 2 of the United Kingdom-Republic of Korea bilateral co-operation agreement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, Cm 1961.

**Mr. Eggar:** None.

### South America

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade for each year since 1986, what were the figures for the 10 most imported goods/services *(a)* in volume and *(b)* in pounds sterling from (i) Argentina, (ii) Brazil, (iii) Chile, (iv) Colombia, (v) Mexico and (vi) Venezuela; and what were the figures for arms exports.

**Mr. Needham:** Details of the value of exports of goods from the United Kingdom to individual countries are published in table V of the "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom." Information on exports of services to individual countries is not readily available.

It has been the consistent policy of successive Governments not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries, for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, for each year since 1986, what were the figures for the 10 most imported goods/services *(a)* in volume and *(b)* in pounds sterling from (1) Argentina, (ii) Brazil, (iii) Chile, (iv) Colombia, (v) Mexico and (vi) Venezuela.

**Mr. Needham:** Details of the value of imports of goods into the United Kingdom from individual countries are published in table II of the Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom. Information on imports of services from individual countries is not readily available.

### Regional Selective Assistance

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what factors and criteria are taken into account in considering applications for regional selective assistance.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Information on regional selective assistance (RSA) is contained in my Department's booklet "Regions", a copy of which is in the Library.

### Nuclear Material (Imports)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much nuclear material has been imported from Iraq since March 1991.

**Mr. Eggar:** None.

### Nuclear Power

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the European Commission communication to the Council of Ministers on the implementation of on-site laboratories at Sellafield for the verification analysis of safeguards samples (SEC (92)515 final) dated 25 March; and what estimate he has made of new costs that would be incurred by the United Kingdom on the adoption of the Commission proposal.

**Mr. Eggar:** There has been no discussion on the topic of Euratom's on-site laboratories in the Council. The

United Kingdom is, however, generally supportive of the proposal. It is anticipated that the use of on-site laboratories will provide savings to the Commission by removing the need to ship safeguards samples to the continent for analysis.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the total cost of research and development to date for *(a)* the Magnox nuclear programme, *(b)* the advanced gas-cooled reactor programme, *(c)* the steam-generated heavy water reactor programme and *(d)* the fast breeder reactor programme and if he will indicate the extent to which these costs were borne by Nuclear Electric or its predecessor bodies.

**Mr. Eggar:** Total expenditure to date by the Atomic Energy Authority on research and development into nuclear reactors is:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Gas cooled reactors | 480 |
| Water reactors | 475 |
| Fast reactors | 1,830 |

The figures are expressed as historic costs. Separate figures for the Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactor programmes are not available. The contributions to these programmes by Nuclear Electric and its predecessors are a matter for the company.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions since 1990 nuclear material has been withdrawn from safeguards under article 14 of the 1978 tripartite agreement between the United Kingdom, Euratom and the International Atomic Energyf Agency.

**Mr. Eggar:** Forty-one withdrawals of nuclear material have been made from safeguards, under article 14 of the UK-Euratom-IAEA tripartite safeguards agreement, since 1 January 1990.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he is able to indicate, without providing any details that would be commercially sensitive, whether Nuclear Electric or British Nuclear Fuels plc has applied to sell any quantities of depleted uranium abroad since 1990.

**Mr. Eggar:** All export licence applications are commercially confidential. Provision of this information is therefore a matter for the companies concerned.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the additional administrative work needed by his Department if the European Council adopts the proposal for a regulation on security measures applicable to classified information produced or transmitted in connection with Euratom activities—Com(92)56 final—issued on 24 February.

**Mr. Eggar:** It is not yet clear how much information would be affected which is not already covered in Council regulation (Euratom) No. 3, which came into force in 1958. An early decision on the proposal is not in any case expected, nor would we expect it be adopted in its present form.

## Guernsey

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what relationship his export licensing department has with trade authorised by companies registered in the states of Guernsey.

**Mr. Needham:** Exports of goods from Guernsey are authorised by the states of Guernsey board of administration under the powers conferred upon it under the Import and Export (Control) (Guernsey) Law 1946. The states of Guernsey export controls mirror those of the United Kingdom as implemented under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991.

Since 1976 the states of Guernsey have consulted Her Majesty's Government before issuing export licences for certain highly sensitive goods subject to export control in the United Kingdom under Export of Goods (Control) Orders.

## Expo 92

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has any plans to re-use the British pavilion at Expo 92 as a permanent showplace for British industry in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Needham:** I have appointed estate agents Healey and Baker and Sturgis International to market the British Pavilion for future use in Seville or elsewhere. The Government have no plans to retain the building for official purposes.

## Export Licences

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will now make it his policy to reply to questions on export licences in cases where it is demonstrable that false declarations were made in regard to the end user certificate.

**Mr. Needham:** If right hon. and hon. Members have any evidence about false declarations in regard to any aspect of export licensing, I should be glad to receive it. However, it has been a long-standing practice to protect the confidential nature of export licence applications. Since the vast majority of such applications are made in good faith by responsible exporters, I intend to maintain the practice of confidentiality.

## Torus Project

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the joint European Torus project.

**Mr. Eggar:** Strategic decisions on the future of the joint European Torus (JET) project are a matter for the Council of Ministers. Decisions on the management of the project are the responsibility of the JET council. In December 1991 the Council of Ministers adopted a decision which extended the life of the project to 1996.

## Departmental Reorganisation

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for reorganising his Department; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Heseltine:** In a speech on 1 June, I announced that I would be reshaping some of the Department of Trade

and Industry on more sectoral lines; and in his statement to the House on 16 June—*Official Report*, columns 777-78—my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear that I would announce details before the summer recess.

I intend to reorganise my Department so as to relate more closely to individual sectors of the industry. The reorganisation will include three main elements:

the creation of a new industrial competitiveness division to see what lessons can be learnt from other leading industrialised countries and to help ensure that policies of all Government Departments take due account of the need to promote the competitiveness of British industry and commerce;

the adoption of a sectoral approach to the industries for which the DTI is responsible by explicitly recognising the extent to which we already follow such an approach and establishing new divisions to cover the key sectors which are not dealt with at present;

assigning to all the sectoral divisions, both new and existing, an explicit role to sponsor their industries, not in an uncritical way but as a basis for an informed dialogue and a constructive partnership between Government and business.

The new structure will allow for the establishment of some new divisions, and the recasting of some previously existing divisions so as to establish a division dealing with industrial competitiveness, together with a range of sectoral divisions dealing with industries including chemicals and biotechnology, steel, metals and minerals, textiles and retailing, electronics and electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, vehicles, aerospace, and telecommunications and posts. In addition, there will, of course, remain other sector-orientated divisions, including the divisions previously belonging to the Department of Energy dealing with fuels, as well as divisions dealing with research and technology policy, the environment, and information and manufacturing technology. Although the DTI has a long-established programme of inward and outward secondment with industry, I am also making clear that the Department will be looking for further industrial secondees. I also expect to fill a small number of posts with staff drawn from the National Economic Development Office.

A reorganisation on these lines, with the relevant divisions having a clear remit to sponsor the industry with which they deal, will, I am convinced, be welcomed by industry and commerce.

## Timeshare

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will increase the funding of trading standards officers to investigate the sales practices of timeshare firms.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* It is the responsibility of individual local weights and measures authorities to fund the trading standards service in their area.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will examine the complaints received by trading standards officers about the timeshare sales practices of International Resort Sales and Travel Ltd., Dunblane; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* If any such complaints are passed to me, they will be carefully examined. However, enforcement of legislation on sales practices is mainly a matter for the trading standards departments of local weights and measures authorities.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider introducing legislation to prevent timeshare agents posing as market researchers.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 1 July 1992]:* No. This practice, which I deplore, has been well publicised by the Office of Fair Trading. I do not consider that legislation is necessary.

## Textiles and Clothing

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage a better balance of trade in textiles and in clothing products.

**Mr. Needham:** The key to a better trade balance in textiles and clothing products lies in the industries' international competitiveness. A range of Government programmes is available to help firms improve their competitive performance. Exports of textiles and clothing in the first quarter of 1992 were 9 per cent. higher than in the same period last year.

*Table 1*

*Programme expenditure 1987-88*

*Expenditure £ million*

| *Region* | *OJTS* | *TFE* | *AIT* | *LGE* | *SSWP* | *TLCP* | *CP* | *NJTS* | *YTS* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South East Cash | 22·76 | 1·60 | 0·14 | 3·06 | 1·35 | 0·18 | — | — | 80·94 |
| London Cash | 16·90 | 2·66 | 1·00 | 2·64 | 4·05 | 0·61 | — | — | 39·29 |
| South West Cash | 12·38 | 1·86 | 0·08 | 1·86 | 1·67 | 0·73 | — | — | 63·61 |
| West Midlands Cash | 10·69 | 2·16 | 0·08 | 4·53 | 2·84 | 0·48 | — | — | 106·29 |
| East Midlands and Eastern Cash | 8·59 | 1·92 | 0·02 | 3·12 | 1·34 | 0·44 | — | — | 95·56 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside Cash | 9·48 | 1·75 | 0·12 | 2·31 | 2·18 | 0·22 | — | — | 88·63 |
| North West Cash | 15·62 | 3·10 | 0·12 | 3·56 | 2·68 | 0·68 | — | — | 132·94 |
| Northern Cash | 8·15 | 1·49 | 0·10 | 2·04 | 1·18 | 0·60 | — | — | 67·79 |
| Wales Cash | 8·60 | 1·03 | 0·05 | 1·79 | 1·17 | 0·61 | — | — | 51·77 |
| Scotland Cash | 12·36 | 1·90 | 0·13 | 3·36 | 1·74 | 0·61 | — | — | 93·42 |
| LCU Cash | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 115·89 |
| RTC Cash | | | | | | | | | |
| GB 9·45 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | |
| 134·98 | 19·47 | 0·94 | 28·25 | 20·19 | 5·16 | 1,109·57 | 64·7 | 1,796·11 | |

*Source:* FMAS.

1. YTS represents Scheme Costs only, other schemes AT 17.

*Notes:*
1. Regional breakdown of CP and NJTS is not available.
2. Large Companies Unit (LCU) is based centrally and holds contracts for major companies who provide training throughout Great Britain.
3. Information is only provided for the larger programmes. There were other smaller programmes in operation for which expenditure is not readily available.

*Table 2*

*Programme expenditure for 1988-89 at current and at 1987-88 prices*

*Expenditure £ million*

| *Region* | *ET* | *YTS* | *OJTS* | *TFE* | *AIT* | *LGE* | *SSWP* | *TLCP* | *NJTS* | *CP* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South East | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 10·47 | 75·89 | 11·94 | 1·19 | 0·01 | 2·91 | 1·08 | 0·12 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 9·77 | 70·81 | 11·14 | 1·11 | 0·01 | 2·72 | 1·00 | 0·11 | — | — |
| London | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 16·05 | 38·21 | 9·99 | 2·45 | 0·01 | 3·14 | 3·39 | 0·51 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 14·97 | 35·65 | 9·33 | 2·28 | 0·01 | 2·93 | 3·16 | 0·48 | — | — |
| South West | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 11·05 | 61·08 | 6·39 | 0·94 | 0·01 | 1·71 | 1·17 | 0·46 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 10·31 | 56·98 | 5·96 | 0·88 | 0·01 | 1·59 | 1·09 | 0·43 | — | — |
| West Midlands | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 20·39 | 96·78 | 6·42 | 1·01 | 0·01 | 3·38 | 1·87 | 0·16 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 19·02 | 90·30 | 5·99 | 0·95 | 0·01 | 3·15 | 1·74 | 0·15 | — | — |
| East Midlands and Eastern | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 12·64 | 92·85 | 5·75 | 0·98 | 0·00 | 2·14 | 1·27 | 0·24 | — | — |

| Region | ET | YTS | OJTS | TFE | AIT | LGE | SSWP | TLCP | NJTS | CP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 Prices | 11·79 | 86·63 | 5·37 | 0·91 | 0·00 | 2·00 | 1·19 | 0·22 | — | — |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 25·02 | 92·57 | 6·60 | 1·07 | 0·00 | 1·49 | 1·42 | 0·10 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 23·34 | 86·37 | 6·16 | 0·99 | 0·00 | 1·39 | 1·33 | 0·09 | — | — |
| North West | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 25·54 | 131·78 | 9·02 | 2·09 | 0·01 | 3·01 | 1·79 | 0·31 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 23·83 | 122·95 | 8·42 | 1·95 | 0·01 | 2·80 | 1·67 | 0·29 | — | — |
| Northern | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 20·12 | 72·46 | 4·93 | 0·94 | 0·01 | 1·59 | 0·85 | 0·21 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 18·77 | 67·61 | 4·60 | 0·88 | 0·01 | 1·49 | 0·79 | 0·20 | — | — |
| Wales | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 12·40 | 52·92 | 4·42 | 0·67 | 0·01 | 1·86 | 0·86 | 0·40 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 11·57 | 49·37 | 4·13 | 0·61 | 0·01 | 1·73 | 0·80 | 0·37 | — | — |
| Scotland | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 25·87 | 102·45 | 6·71 | 1·03 | 0·01 | 3·24 | 1·02 | 0·36 | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 24·14 | 95·59 | 6·26 | 0·97 | 0·01 | 3·02 | 0·95 | 0·33 | — | — |
| LCU | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 42·19 | 163·30 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 39·36 | 152·36 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| RTC | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | — | — | 9·49 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | — | — | 8·85 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| GB | 221·72 | 980·38 | 81·67 | 12·35 | 0·04 | 24·46 | 14·70 | 2·86 | 46·96 | 676·85 |
| | 206·87 | 914·69 | 76·19 | 11·52 | 0·04 | 22·82 | 13·72 | 2·67 | 43·81 | 631·50 |

*Source:* FMAS

*Notes:*

1. Large Companies Unit (LCU) and Large Contractors Unit (LCU) are based centrally and hold contracts for major companies who provide training throughout Great Britain.
2. Regional breakdown of CP + NJTS is not available.
3. YTS represents schemes costs only.
4. London is Greater London.
5. Information is only provided for the larger programmes. There were other smaller programmes in operation for which expenditure is not readily available.

*Table 3*

*Programme expenditure for 1989-90 at current and at 1987-88 Prices*

*Expenditure £ million*

| Region | ET | Residual AT | YTS | BGT | SFS | EAS | BEP (Outside ET) | WRFE | TVEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South East | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 31·21 | 1·65 | 74·55 | 1·56 | 0·41 | 12·55 | 0·45 | 19·22 | 26·57 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 27·31 | 1·44 | 65·23 | 1·37 | 0·36 | 10·98 | 0·39 | 16·82 | 23·82 |
| London | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 46·11 | 3·54 | 38·78 | 1·80 | 0·20 | 14·82 | 1·06 | 14·28 | 12·27 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 40·35 | 3·10 | 33·93 | 1·58 | 0·18 | 12·97 | 0·93 | 12·50 | 10·74 |
| South West | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 25·60 | 1·42 | 59·39 | 0·87 | 0·27 | 12·32 | 0·34 | 9·66 | 8·19 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 22·40 | 1·24 | 51·97 | 0·76 | 0·24 | 10·78 | 0·30 | 8·45 | 7·17 |
| West Midlands | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 43·23 | 1·86 | 87·65 | 1·32 | 0·25 | 12·52 | 0·35 | 11·49 | 13·06 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 37·83 | 1·63 | 76·69 | 1·16 | 0·22 | 10·96 | 0·31 | 10·05 | 11·43 |
| East Midlands and Eastern | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 33·08 | 1·66 | 91·14 | 0·98 | 0·36 | 12·81 | 0·33 | 12·40 | 12·17 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 28·95 | 1·45 | 79·75 | 0·86 | 0·32 | 11·21 | 0·29 | 10·85 | 10·65 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 50·97 | 2·20 | 87·11 | 1·03 | 0·29 | 12·69 | 0·34 | 9·68 | 9·99 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 44·60 | 1·93 | 76·22 | 0·90 | 0·25 | 11·10 | 0·30 | 8·47 | 8·74 |
| North West | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 56·11 | 3·65 | 120·94 | 1·70 | 0·52 | 19·75 | 0·83 | 15·38 | 13·80 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 49·10 | 3·19 | 105·82 | 1·49 | 0·46 | 17·28 | 0·73 | 13·46 | 12·08 |

| Region | ET | Residual AT | YTS | BGT | SFS | EAS | BEP (Outside ET) | WRFE | TVEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northern | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 42·10 | 1·31 | 69·44 | 1·01 | 0·21 | 7·72 | 0·24 | 4·51 | 9·07 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 36·84 | 1·15 | 60·76 | 0·89 | 0·18 | 6·76 | 0·21 | 3·95 | 7·94 |
| Wales | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 32·74 | 1·75 | 50·75 | 0·47 | — | 8·95 | 0·20 | 5·31 | 7·50 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 28·65 | 1·53 | 44·41 | 0·41 | — | 7·83 | 0·18 | 4·65 | 6·56 |
| Scotland | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 60·70 | 3·24 | 102·69 | 0·91 | — | 10·97 | 0·33 | — | 11·54 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 53·11 | 2·84 | 89·85 | 0·80 | — | 9·60 | 0·29 | — | 10·10 |
| TNPU | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 109·30 | — | 181·34 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 95·64 | — | 158·67 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| RTC | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 7·37 | 1·75 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 6·45 | 1·53 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| GB | 538·52 | 24·03 | 963·78 | 11·65 | 2·51 | 125·1 | 4·47 | 101·93 | 124·16 |
| | 471·23 | 21·03 | 843·31 | 10·19 | 2·20 | 109·46 | 3·91 | 89·19 | 108·64 |

*Notes:*
1. Expenditure excludes training allowances and other costs administered centrally.
2. The TECs and National Provider's unit (TNPU) is based centrally and holds contracts for major companies who provide training throughout Great Britain.
3. Figures given for residual AT include Voluntary Projects Programme (VPP), Community Programme (CP) and New JTS.
4. Figures quoted are as at end March 1990 and some minor adjustments may have been made when the end year definitive statistics were produced.
5. London is greater London.
6. Information is only provided for the larger programmes. There were other smaller programmes in operation for which expenditure is not readily available.

*Table 4*

*Programme expenditure for 1990-91 at current and at 1987-88 prices*

*Expenditure £ million*

| Region | Block 1 | ET | HTNT | EAS | BGT | SFS | LENS | TPS | LDPs | Marketing and LIF | WRFE | TVEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South East | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 64·76 | 30·48 | 1·49 | 15·33 | 3·90 | 0·34 | 0·06 | 0·57 | — | 1·90 | 19·06 | 21·18 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 52·46 | 24·69 | 1·21 | 11·59 | 3·16 | 0·28 | 0·04 | 0·46 | — | 1·54 | 15·44 | 17·16 |
| London | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 32·90 | 47·10 | 3·29 | 16·35 | 4·72 | — | 0·11 | 0·89 | 0·02 | 0·65 | 15·48 | 12·17 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 26·65 | 38·15 | 2·80 | 13·25 | 3·83 | — | 0·09 | 0·72 | 0·01 | 0·53 | 12·54 | 10·00 |
| South West | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 48·62 | 24·31 | 2·23 | 12·36 | 3·53 | 0·19 | 0·02 | 0·69 | — | 1·59 | 7·83 | 8·83 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 39·39 | 19·69 | 1·81 | 10·01 | 2·86 | 0·15 | 0·01 | 0·56 | — | 1·28 | 6·35 | 7·15 |
| West Midlands | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 71·95 | 39·85 | 1·70 | 13·26 | 4·26 | 0·21 | 0·03 | 1·13 | 0·04 | 1·20 | 11·48 | 19·05 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 58·28 | 32·28 | 1·38 | 10·74 | 3·45 | 0·17 | 0·02 | 0·92 | 0·03 | 0·97 | 9·30 | 15·43 |
| East Midlands and Eastern | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 76·15 | 28·77 | 1·45 | 13·71 | 3·51 | 0·64 | 0·02 | 1·13 | 0·02 | 0·88 | 12·59 | 12·69 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 61·68 | 23·30 | 1·18 | 11·11 | 2·85 | 0·52 | 0·02 | 0·91 | 0·01 | 0·71 | 10·20 | 10·28 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 78·57 | 48·72 | 3·12 | 13·68 | 3·89 | 0·41 | 0·03 | 1·00 | 0·02 | 1·46 | 9·53 | 10·93 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 63·64 | 39·46 | 2·53 | 11·08 | 3·15 | 0·33 | 0·02 | 0·81 | 0·01 | 1·19 | 7·72 | 8·86 |
| North West | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 108·34 | 53·18 | 1·75 | 21·71 | 5·12 | 0·50 | 0·04 | 1·54 | 0·02 | 1·92 | 15·80 | 14·39 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 87·75 | 43·07 | 1·42 | 17·59 | 4·15 | 0·40 | 0·03 | 1·24 | 0·01 | 1·55 | 12·80 | 11·66 |
| Northern | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 57·68 | 44·36 | 1·88 | 8·41 | 2·32 | 0·14 | — | 0·28 | 0·13 | 1·60 | 4·62 | 5·89 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 46·72 | 35·93 | 1·53 | 6·81 | 1·81 | 0·11 | — | 0·23 | 0·10 | 1·30 | 3·74 | 4·77 |
| Wales | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 42·62 | 29·65 | 0·98 | 9·13 | 3·11 | — | 0·02 | 0·81 | 0·05 | 0·86 | 5·24 | 7·77 |

| Region | Block 1 | ET | HTNT | EAS | BGT | SFS | LENS | TPS | LDPs | Marketing and LIF | WRFE | TVEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 Prices | 34·52 | 24·02 | 0·79 | 7·39 | 1·71 | — | 0·01 | 0·66 | 0·04 | 0·70 | 4·24 | 6·29 |
| Scotland | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 94·42 | 61·10 | 3·03 | 12·48 | 4·75 | — | 0·06 | 1·93 | 0·09 | 0·71 | — | 12·08 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 76·48 | 49·49 | 2·46 | 10·11 | 3·85 | — | 0·05 | 1·56 | 0·08 | 0·58 | — | 9·79 |
| TNPU | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 125·29 | 79·93 | — | — | — | — | — | 0·77 | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 101·49 | 64·74 | — | — | — | — | — | 0·63 | — | — | — | — |
| GB | 801·30 | 487·4 | 20·9 | 136·4 | 38·12 | 0·24 | 0·39 | 10·75 | 0·35 | 12·77 | 101·63 | 124·99 |
| | 649·05 | 394·8 | 17·0 | 110·5 | 30·87 | 2·00 | 0·32 | 8·69 | 0·28 | 10·35 | 82·32 | 101·24 |

*Source:* FMAS
*Notes:*
1. Total Block 1 expenditure includes UPA Compacts, YT and Residual area office expenditure.
2. Total ET payments include Energy & Top up Grants.
3. Total BGT payments include WCL.

*Table 5*

*Programme expenditure for 1991-92 at current and at 1987-88 prices*

*Expenditure £ million*

| Region | ET | HTNT | EA | [1]YT | Comps | WRFE | EBP | TPS | BET | EAS | Block 4 | TVEI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| South East | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 29·93 | 2·24 | 0·74 | 91·51 | — | 19·85 | 0·57 | 0·10 | 8·93 | 11·35 | 7·07 | 29·78 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 22·63 | 1·69 | 0·56 | 69·18 | — | 15·01 | 0·43 | 0·07 | 6·75 | 9·19 | 5·73 | 24·12 |
| London | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 44·63 | 3·08 | 0·89 | 48·19 | 0·89 | 16·51 | 0·30 | — | 9·46 | 12·80 | 5·26 | 12·86 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 33·74 | 2·32 | 0·68 | 36·43 | 0·67 | 12·48 | 0·23 | — | 7·15 | 10·37 | 4·29 | 10·41 |
| South West | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 21·99 | 1·54 | 0·53 | 63·52 | 0·20 | 9·79 | 0·26 | 0·02 | 7·02 | 9·62 | 8·37 | 11·30 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 16·63 | 1·16 | 0·40 | 48·02 | 0·15 | 7·40 | 0·20 | 0·02 | 5·31 | 7·79 | 6·78 | 9·15 |
| West Midlands | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 37·61 | 1·55 | 0·55 | 84·59 | 0·61 | 11·15 | 0·34 | 0·09 | 6·30 | 9·91 | 7·83 | 18·15 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 28·44 | 1·17 | 0·42 | 63·95 | 0·46 | 8·43 | 0·25 | 0·06 | 4·76 | 8·02 | 6·34 | 14·70 |
| East Midlands and Eastern | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 32·42 | 1·43 | 0·89 | 98·88 | 0·20 | 12·28 | 0·36 | 0·13 | 6·73 | 10·62 | 6·25 | 16·95 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 24·51 | 1·08 | 0·67 | 74·75 | 0·15 | 9·29 | 0·27 | 0·09 | 5·09 | 8·60 | 5·06 | 13·73 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 48·88 | 3·30 | 1·10 | 95·75 | 0·89 | 9·93 | 0·32 | 0·01 | 4·39 | 11·15 | 6·03 | 11·07 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 36·95 | 2·49 | 0·86 | 72·39 | 0·67 | 7·50 | 0·24 | 0·01 | 3·32 | 9·03 | 4·89 | 8·96 |
| North West | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 53·43 | 2·51 | 1·10 | 121·92 | 1·42 | 15·31 | 0·45 | 0·16 | 8·90 | 16·43 | 13·02 | 17·17 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 40·39 | 1·90 | 0·85 | 92·17 | 1·07 | 11·58 | 0·34 | 0·12 | 6·73 | 13·31 | 10·55 | 13·91 |
| Northern | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 41·12 | 1·87 | 0·76 | 70·52 | 0·57 | 4·62 | 0·15 | 0·03 | 5·84 | 6·05 | 5·11 | 8·42 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 31·08 | 1·41 | 0·57 | 53·31 | 0·43 | 3·49 | 0·11 | 0·02 | 4·42 | 4·90 | 4·14 | 6·82 |
| Wales | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 26·22 | 0·86 | 0·61 | 48·90 | 0·42 | 6·83 | 0·16 | 0·01 | 4·34 | 7·14 | 4·68 | 9·21 |
| 1987-88 Prices | 19·82 | 0·65 | 0·46 | 36·97 | 0·32 | 5·17 | 0·12 | 0·01 | 3·28 | 5·78 | 3·79 | 7·46 |
| TNPU | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| cash | 3·66 | — | — | 7·00 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 1987-88 Prices | 2·77 | — | — | 5·29 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| GB | 339·88 | 18·36 | 7·20 | 730·76 | 5·18 | 106·29 | 2·90 | 0·54 | 61·92 | 95·07 | 63·67 | 134·90 |
| | 256·95 | 13·88 | 5·50 | 552·55 | 3·92 | 80·36 | 2·19 | 0·40 | 46·81 | 77·00 | 51·57 | 109·27 |

*Source:* FMAS
*Notes:*
1. EAS + BET Expenditure includes WCL.
2. ET expenditure excludes ET allowances.
3. Block 4 includes LIF, Advertising & Publicity, Evaluation & Research, Youth Development Projects and residual area office expenditure.

4. Information for Scotland is not available.
5. TECs & National Providers Unit (TNPU) is based centrally and holds contracts for major companies who provide training throughout England and Wales.
[1]Including credits.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the training and enterprise council schemes and projects receiving grant under the Employment Directorate's national development prospectus for 1992-93.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** A total of 211 projects has been approved under the training and enterprise council national development prospectus for the financial year 1992-93. A catalogue giving brief descriptions of each approved project and indicating which training and enterprise council will be carrying out the work is to be published on 23 June 1992. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library and for a copy to be forwarded to the hon. Member.

## Hazards (Emergency Plans)

**Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give, for each county, region and fire civil defence authority area *(a)* the number of sites notified to those authorities as requiring an off-site emergency plan under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 and *(b)* the number of such notified sites for which the Health and Safety Executive is still awaiting the production of a safety case as specified by the regulations.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information is not available in the form requested.

The table shows the number of sites notified to each Health and Safety Executive area office as at 31 December 1991, and which are required by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 to provide information to the relevant local authority so that it may prepare an off-site emergency plan. The table also shows, by area, the number of safety reports required to be submitted to the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with regulation 7 of the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations and which were outstanding at 31 December 1991.

| *Health and Safety Executive area office* | *Number of sites for which an off-site emergency plan is required* | *Number of safety reports awaited* |
|---|---|---|
| 01. South West | 14 | 5 |
| 02. South | 9 | 2 |
| 03. South East | 15 | 7 |
| 05. London North | 12 | 6 |
| 06. London South | 4 | — |
| 07. East Anglia | 23 | 5 |
| 08. Home Counties North | 7 | 5 |
| 09. East Midlands | 8 | 1 |
| 10. West Midlands | 7 | 2 |
| 11. Wales | 28 | 6 |
| 12. Marches | 16 | 1 |
| 13. North Midlands | 14 | 3 |
| 14. South Yorkshire and Humberside | 25 | 4 |
| 15. West and North Yorkshire | 12 | 7 |
| 16. Greater Manchester | 12 | 5 |
| 17. Merseyside | 30 | 12 |
| 18. North West | 6 | 4 |
| 19. North East | 16 | 1 |
| 20. Scotland East | 23 | 2 |
| 21. Scotland West | 8 | 3 |

Of the 81 safety reports awaited, 80 were not required to be submitted to the Health and Safety Executive until either 24 March 1992 or 1 June 1994 in order to comply with the first and second amendments to the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations.

## Employment Training

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the minimum, the maximum and the average period of employment training of people who join employment training and who are in employment or self-employment within three months after leaving.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Trainees leaving employment training in Great Britain in the period April to August 1991, the latest date for which information is available, who were in employment or self-employment three months after leaving had spent a minimum of one day and a maximum of about 18 months in training. On average such trainees spend about six and a half months on ET.

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for every 100 people who join employment training, how many are in employment or self-employment six months, nine months and 12 months after leaving, respectively.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Information is not available in the precise form requested. Of those trainees leaving employment training in Great Britain in the period April to August 1991, the latest date for which information is available, 30 per cent. were in employment or self-employment three months after leaving and 31 per cent. after six months. Information is not available on leavers' status at nine and 12 months after leaving.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training places there are in the London borough of Newham; and what was the comparable position last year.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information regarding the number of ET places available in the London borough of

Newham is not collected. Since 1 April 1991, training in Newham has been the responsibility of London East training and enterprise council, LETEC. At 29 March 1992, there were an estimated 3,600 people in training on ET in the LETEC area.

## Health and Safety

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the United Kingdom health and safety at work figures and those of other EC countries..

**Mr. McLoughlin:** A study published by the Health and Safety Executive for May 1991[1] contains a comparison of accident statistics showing that British rates of fatal injury were substantially lower, both for main industrial sectors and for all industries combined, than in Italy, France and Spain, apart from agriculture where rates were roughly similar to those in Britain, and lower than in west Germany in manufacturing and services. It also suggests that a similar position applied for non-fatal injuries.

[1] "Workplace Health and Safety in Europe" HMSO 1991 (ISBN 0-11-885614-6)

## Industrial Deafness

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures she will take to ensure industry in the United Kingdom follows the EC directive to combat industrial deafness.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Noise at Work Regulations 1989 came into force on 1 January 1990 implementing the EC directive on the protection of workers from noise.

Since the introduction of the regulations, health and safety inspectors have given priority to a wide-ranging programme to promote awareness of and compliance with the regulations, through advisory and enforcement action. They have been widely publicised through a series of free leaflets and other guidance, including industry specific advice. Regional campaigns have emphasised the risks to health and the need for action. The HSE expects to publish an assessment of the impact of the regulations during 1993.

## Offshore Industries

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional funding or staffing is to be made available to the Health and Safety Executive in Edinburgh to enable it to investigate potential disasters in offshore industries; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The Health and Safety Executive's offshore safety division has no plans to base any of its operations or staff in Edinburgh. Its operational base for the northern basin of the United Kingdom continental shelf is in Aberdeen. On 1 June 1992, however, HSE's field operations division had 95 staff located in Edinburgh.

## Fairground Safety

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents at fairgrounds including fatalities have occurred in each of the past 10 years; what percentage of fairgrounds are inspected annually by Health and Safety inspectors; how many enforcement notices on rides which required improvement or closure have been issued in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement about fairground safety.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The following table shows the number of fatal and other injuries, to employed persons and members of the public at fairgrounds and pleasure parks reported to the Health and Safety Executive from 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1991:

| *Year*[1] | *Employed persons*[2] *Severity of injury* | | *Members of the public*[4] *Severity of injury* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Fatal* | *Major/over 3 day*[3] | *Fatal* | *Major* |
| 1986-87 | 1 | 24 | 1 | 70 |
| 1987-88 | 1 | 26 | 4 | 107 |
| 1988-89 | — | 41 | 2 | 169 |
| 1989-90 | — | 29 | — | 107 |
| 1990-91 | — | 38 | 3 | 108 |

[1] 1 April to 31 March.
[2] Employees (including trainees) and self-employed persons.
[3] Major injuries as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR); over three-day injuries which cause absence from work for over three days.
[4] Over three day injuries to members of the public are not reportable under RIDDOR.

Injury data for the years prior to 1986-87 are not available.

Information is not available as to the percentage of fairgrounds which are inspected annually by Health and Safety Executive inspectors.

Between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992 the Health and Safety Executive issued a total of five improvement notices and 12 prohibition notices in connection with fairground safety.

Sections 2 and 3 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 place responsibilities on employers and the self employed to ensure the health and safety of those at work and also others who might be affected by the work activity. At visits to work activities, including fairgrounds and pleasure parks for which they have responsibility for the enforcement of health and safety legislation, Health and Safety Executive inspectors seek compliance with the provisions of the Act and take whatever action is appropriate to ensure that those responsible comply with their legal duties.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what talks she has had with the British Safety Council about safety in fairgrounds.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I have had no such talks.

## High Peak TEC

**Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the engineering training placements for youth training currently provided through High Peak training and enterprise council.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** This information is not collected centrally or readily available and is a matter for the training and enterprise council. However, if the hon. Member wishes to approach Stockport and High Peak TEC direct, the chief executive may be able to make arrangements to accommodate this request.

**Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what investigations her staff have made

about the amount of public money being spent in administrative costs and staffing by High Peak training and enterprise council.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** All training and enterprise councils are subject to a schedule of regular reviews by Department officials in which the financial and performance aspects of training and enterprise council activity are considered. Further ad hoc reviews can take place if appropriate, though at present none is planned for Stockport and High Peak training and enterprise council.

### Toxic Sprays

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the typical speed of response by the Health and Safety Executive to complaints that toxic material has been sprayed on property as a result of agricultural operations by a third party.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The priority afforded by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive to the investigation of complaints, including those that allege that toxic material has been sprayed on property as a result of agricultural operations by a third party, is determined by the apparent gravity of the complaint. Most complaints are cleared within a month of receipt and matters which are considered serious are dealt with more quickly.

### Travel-to-work Areas

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library a copy of the background paper on travel-to-work areas and questionnaire being sent to local authorities; if she will give details of the aims and plans of her review of travel-to-work areas; when she expects the review to be completed; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) on 19 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *136*, in which I stated that new travel-to-work area boundaries will be calculated from the community patterns contained in the 1991 census of population special workplace statistics. These statistics are expected to become available in the second half of 1993 and revised travel-to-work areas should follow six to nine months later. Part of this review involves liaising with users and it is planned to send a background paper and questionnaire on this topic to local authorities shortly. I will arrange for copies of the background paper and questionnaire to be placed in the Library when they are finalised.

### Syringes

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations she has received and what studies she has made concerning the problem of injuries sustained to individuals by discarded syringes; and if she will take action to require that such equipment shall be disposed of responsibly.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I am not aware of any specific representation on discarded syringes nor of any studies made of injuries in this particular context. In view of the controls already in place, and the detailed guidance which is available, I do not believe there is a case for further action, but the position is kept under review.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Domestic Pets (Poisoning)

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the incidence of poisoning of domestic pets by substancess containing strychnine.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I have been asked to reply.

No information is available on the incidence of poisoning of domestic pets by substances containing strychnine.

### Whaling

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he uses to assess whether whales can be killed in an acceptable and humane manner; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** Although there are no criteria in United Kingdom legislation, we believe that whales should be killed by methods which render them insensitive to pain or suffering until death supervenes. A special workshop, established by the International Whaling Commission to review humane killing methods, met recently in Glasgow and the results of the workshop will be considered by the Commission which meets on 29 June to 3 July. I look forward to receiving the advice of the Commission on these matters.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his scientists *(a)* have carried out into the cruelty aspects of killing whales and *(b)* are conducting into methods of killing whales humanely; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** None. The United Kingdom has issued no licences for commercial whaling since 1963.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the resolutions the United Kingdom Government intend to *(a)* propose and *(b)* support at the International Whaling Commission meeting at the end of June.

**Mr. Gummer:** It would be premature and inappropriate to list the resolutions which the United Kingdom intends to formulate, put forward or support at the meeting of the International Whaling Commission on 29 June to 3 July in advance of receiving the report of the IWC's scientific committee, the outcome of many working groups meeting between 24 and 27 June and our discussions within the Commission on an extensive range of agenda items.

### Dumping at Sea

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many licences for the dumping of materials at sea were issued by his Department in *(a)* 1990 and *(b)* 1991; what materials they were issued for; what quantities were involved; what areas of sea were used; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The information is as follows:

| | 1990 | | 1991 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number of licences | Licensed quantity '000 tonnes | Number of licences | Licensed quantity '000 tonnes |
| Liquid industrial waste | 5 | 228 | 2 | 205 |
| Solid industrial waste | 9 | 6,575 | 8 | 5,625 |
| Sewage sludge | 14 | 8,554 | 14 | 8,373 |
| Dredged material | 135 | 63,984 | 105 | 53,746 |

Details of the disposal sites used in 1990 will shortly be published in the aquatic environment monitoring report series issued by the Ministry's directorate of fisheries research. However, it is unlikely that the pattern of disposal either for 1990 or 1991 will vary much from that for 1988-89 which is set out in report No. 26, a copy of which is available in the Library.

The two liquid industrial waste licences are due to be phased out by the end of this year, as is one for power station flyash which is classified as solid industrial waste. The other licences in this category are for colliery by-products. Disposal of these materials on the beaches will end in 1995 and at sea by 1997 unless application of the planning system demonstrates that no practical alternative means of disposal exist. Sewage sludge dumping will end in 1998.

## Animal Diseases

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many cases there have been of porcine intestinal adeomatosis, non-specific colitis and swine dysentry in pigs in each month since January 1991;

(2) how many cases there have been of swine influenza in each month since January 1991;

(3) how many cases there have been of meningitis in pigs in each month since January 1991;

(4) how many cases there have been of sinusitis and synovitis in turkeys in each month since January 1991;

(5) how many cases there have been of *(a)* Marek's disease, *(b)* broiler ascites, *(c)* egg peritonitis and *(d)* infectious bursal disease in commercial poultry in each month since January 1991;

(6) how many cases of duck viral enteritis there have been in each month since January 1991.

**Mr. Soames:** None of the diseases listed is notifiable and comprehensive data is not maintained. The numbers of cases recorded by veterinary investigation centres for the months concerned are as noted:

*Draft response collectively for PQ Nos 322, 323, 324, 326, 327, 328*

| | 1991 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1992 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | March |
| Porcine Intestinal Adenomatosis | 7 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Non-Specific Colitis (Pigs) | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Swine Dysentry | 26 | 23 | 16 | 24 | 16 | 17 | 21 | 11 | 19 | 18 | 26 | 18 | 19 | 41 | 11 |
| Swine Influenza | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 15 | 26 |
| Streptococcal Meningitis (Pigs) | 15 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 18 | 14 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 15 | 3 | 11 | 12 | 9 |
| Mycoplasma Synoviae[1] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mycoplasma Meleagridis[1] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rhinotracheitis[1] | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Marek's Disease[2] | 8 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| Broiler Ascites Syndrome[2] | 9 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 19 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 10 |
| Egg Peritonitis[2] | 6 | 6 | 8 | 21 | 9 | 14 | 13 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Infectious Bursal Disease[2] | 10 | 10 | 10 | 15 | 17 | 9 | 23 | 18 | 19 | 31 | 9 | 13 | 6 | 12 | 14 |
| Duck Viral Enteritis | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

*Note:*
[1] In turkeys: related to synoviae and sinusitis
[2] In fowls, turkeys, ducks and geese
figures for April and May are not yet available.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cases of birds, by species, whose cause of death was from ingesting grain which had been treated with pesticides in each month since January 1991.

**Mr. Curry:** The information requested, based on confirmed incidents in England and Wales reported through the wildlife incident investigation scheme, is as follows:

*Pheasant*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | January 1991 |
| One case | May 1991 |
| One case | March 1992 |

*Jay*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | January 1991 |

*Jackdaw*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | May 1992 |

*Rook*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | March 1992 |

*Woodpigeon*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | January 1991 |

*Feral/Racing pigeon*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | May 1991 |
| Three case | November 1991 |
| One case | December 1991 |
| One case | January 1992 |

*Robin*

| | |
|---|---|
| One case | January 1992 |

## Market Testing

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all those functions and areas in his Department and associated agencies that have been identified for market testing in the wake of the White Paper "Competing for Quality".

**Mr. Curry:** Proposals for expanding our existing market testing programme are still under consideration.

## Set-Aside Scheme

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers have received payment under the set-aside scheme in 1991 in each county in England for *(a)* horse-based activities, *(b)* golf courses, *(c)* game cover for commercial shoots, *(d)* sports grounds, *(e)* other recreational facilities and *(f)* other; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** The following table list the number of agreements under the non-agricultural use option of the set-aside scheme for those who entered the scheme in 1988, 1989 and 1990. Payments will have been made under all these agreements in 1991. No payments have yet been made to participants who entered the scheme in 1991.

*Set-Aside Agreements 1988-90*

| | [1] *Horse based activities* | *Golf courses* | *Game cover for commercial shoots* | *Sports grounds* | *Other recreational facilities* | *Other uses under non-agricultural use option* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avon | 19 | — | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Bedfordshire | 18 | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| Berkshire | 19 | — | 2 | — | 1 | 1 |
| Buckinghamshire | 36 | 1 | 1 | 3 | — | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 24 | 5 | — | 1 | — | 4 |
| Cheshire | 15 | 1 | — | — | — | 1 |
| Cleveland | 1 | — | 1 | — | — | — |
| Cornwall | 14 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 | — |
| Cumbria | 2 | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Derbyshire | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Devonshire | 19 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Dorset | 9 | 1 | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Durham | 10 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Essex | 45 | 3 | 1 | 1 | — | 5 |
| Gloustershire | 30 | 2 | 3 | 3 | — | 1 |
| Greater London | 6 | — | — | 1 | — | 2 |
| Greater Manchester | 10 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Hampshire | 29 | — | 4 | 1 | — | 3 |
| Hereford/Worcestershire | 17 | 3 | 1 | — | 2 | 1 |
| Hertfordshire | 16 | 2 | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Humberside | 6 | 5 | — | — | — | 6 |
| Isle of Wight | 2 | — | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Kent | 44 | 5 | 6 | 1 | — | 4 |
| Lancashire | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Leicestershire | 22 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Lincolnshire | 12 | 3 | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Merseyside | 9 | — | 2 | 2 | — | 2 |
| Norfolk | 17 | 1 | — | 1 | — | 4 |
| Northamptonshire | 14 | 3 | 1 | 2 | — | 2 |
| Northumberland | 9 | — | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Nottinghamshire | 8 | 3 | — | — | 1 | 3 |
| Oxfordshire | 42 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Shropshire | 10 | 1 | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Somerset | 18 | 2 | — | — | 1 | 2 |
| Staffordshire | 15 | 1 | — | 1 | — | 2 |
| Suffolk | 33 | 2 | — | 4 | — | 2 |
| Surrey | 16 | 1 | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| East Sussex | 15 | 2 | 4 | — | 1 | 5 |
| West Sussex | 24 | 3 | — | — | 1 | 2 |
| Tyne and Wear | 5 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Warwickshire | 22 | 6 | — | — | — | 3 |
| Wiltshire | 27 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| North Yorkshire | 23 | 1 | 3 | — | 1 | 11 |
| South Yorkshire | 1 | — | — | — | — | — |
| West Yorkshire | 5 | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Totals | 749 | 70 | 40 | 29 | 17 | 78 |

[1] (Livery stables, riding schools, stud farms, hay for horses, grazing for horses, horse riders)

## SCOTLAND

### Cockle Fishing

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about cockle fishing by Dutch boats in the Solway; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** Under EC legislation, fishing within the zero to six-mile zone of United Kingdom territorial waters is permitted only for United Kingdom-registered fishing vessels. Cockle fishing in the Solway takes place only within this zone. No reports have been received of fishing boats not registered in the United Kingdom taking part in the cockle fishery.

I have just received a scientific assessment of the Solway firth cockle stock which recommended that conservation measures were necessary to protect that stock. This is of concern to me and I have issued today a consultation paper proposing a seasonal closure of the fishery during the first half of the year. This can be introduced by order under section 1 of the Inshore Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1984 and would limit fishing vessel activity. I am aware that land-based dredges pulled by tractors fish for cockles as well. On shore, local authorities have the power to promote byelaws to control the use of vehicles including tractors, on the foreshore. My officials have written to them today, drawing their attention to these powers.

### Fish Directives

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the guidance his Department is issuing to authorities in Britain enforcing the EC fish and shellfish hygiene directives on how to advise Scottish producers and processors in applying for derogations for the directives provisions.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 15 May 1992]:* Application forms for derogations, accompanied by explanatory memoranda, were sent to district and island authorities in Scotland by my Department on 30 April. District and island council environmental health departments are issuing this material to those in the fish and shellfish trade known to them and to other interested parties on application. My Department will also supply copies of the forms and memoranda on request and I am arranging for copies to be deposited with the Library of the House.

### Council Houses

**Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of houses owned by each district council and islands council and the number of these equipped with central heating.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 22 May 1992]:* The latest available information on local authority housing stock was published in table 14 of the statistical bulletin HSG/1991/7. Copies were sent to all Members representing Scottish constituencies and are available in the House Library.

Information on the proportion of local authority housing stock equipped with central heating is not collected centrally.

### Urban Partnership

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has reviewed the success of the four Scottish urban partnership initiatives; if he has any plans to extend such initiatives to the Foxbar Rivers area of Paisley and the Johnstone west area of priority treatment; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 2 June 1992]:* The four Scottish Office-led urban partnership initiatives announced in "New Life for Urban Scotland" in 1988 were conceived as pilot initiatives designed to demonstrate the benefits of a comprehensive, strategic approach to the problems of severely disadvantaged communities in our cities and towns. The partnerships bring together, in a co-ordinated fashion, the activities of all relevant public sector organisations. In addition, both the local communities and the private sector are fully involved in the partnership process.

Given the intensity of the problems faced in these areas, it was recognised at the outset that regeneration would require long-term commitment—possibly up to 10 years. Formal monitoring and evaluation procedures have been built into these initiatives since their conception. Although it is too early to draw firm conclusions, there are a number of encouraging signs of success. In economic terms, more than 5,000 jobs have been found for local residents and more than 1,700 training placements have been made. Substantial physical progress has been made with improvements to more than 4,000 houses and the construction of 1,000 new homes completed, under way or planned.

There are no plans at present to increase the number of Scottish Office-led urban partnership initiatives, but I am confident that the lessons learnt through careful monitoring and evaluation of the partnership initiatives will be very relevant to the regeneration of other disadvantaged areas in urban Scotland.

### [illegible]encies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency as an agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The official launch ceremony for the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency was cancelled because it coincided with the general election.

The occasion was marked by an informal reception for staff including a tree-planting ceremony at a cost of £1,133.

This cost was borne by the agency from within existing budget resources.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum salary payable, including performance related element, and the length of time of the contract, of the chief executive of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The maximum salary payable is £46,122 and the length of the contract is five years.

## Conservation Organisations

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the names of those persons who have sat on the advisory panel for the Scottish Heritage Trust and the former Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland since 1987.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 28 May 1992]:* I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Nature Conservancy Council's committee for Scotland which existed prior to the establishment of the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland on 1 April 1991, which itself became part of Scottish Natural Heritage on 1 April 1992. The information is as follows:

1. *Nature Conservancy Council Committee for Scotland*
J. M. S. Arnott
R. W. G. Cameron, RIBA, MRTPI
J. C. Compton, BSc
Professor P. S. Corbet, DSc, ScD
Professor R. I. Currie, CBE, FRSE, FIBiol
A. D. M. Farquharson
J. L. Goodfellow
J. R. Johnston, CBE
Dr. R. C. Kirkwood, BSc, PhD, FRSE
Sir John Lister-Kaye, Bt
Mrs. E. Macdonald, MBE BSc
Councillor D. J. McPherson
M. Magnusson, KBE MA FRSE FRSA
Professor A. W. G. Manning, DPhil, FIBiol, FRSE
Professor J. B. L. Matthews, MA, DPhil, FRSE
Professor I. Parsons, PhD, BSc, FRSE
Professor W. Ritchie, BSc, PhD, FRSE
J. H. Scott
Professor T. C. Smout, MA, PhD, FRSE
Dr. E. A Smith, CBE
Lt. Cmdr. E. F. B. Spragge, FRSA RN (Retd)
Professor D. E. Sugden
Miss V. M. Thom, BSc, (Agric)
A. R. Trotter

2. *Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland*
B. Cowe, MBE
The Earl of Dalkeith
Professor G. M. Dunnet, OBE
D. L. Laird
Sir John Lister-Kay, Bt
Professor A. D. McIntyre
Councillor D. J. McPherson
M. Magnusson, KBE, MA, FRSE, FRSA
Dr. P. Monaghan
Dr. W. E. S. Mutch, OBE
Professor T. C. Smout, MA, PhD. FRSE
Professor D. E. Sugden

3. *Scottish Natural Heritage*
A. Blackshaw
Mrs. Nan Burnett
B. Cowe, MBE
R. Dennis, MBE
The Earl of Dalkeith
Professor G. M. Dunnet, OBE
D. L. Laird
Sir John Lister-Kaye, Bt
Councillor D. J. McPherson
M. Magnusson, KBE, MA, FRSE, FRSA
Dr. W. E. S. Mutch, OBE
Professor T. C. Smout, MA, PhD, FRSE

## Buccleuch Estate

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the value of grant allocated by the Nature Conservancy Council or associated bodies to the Buccleuch estate connected with the establishment of a site of special scientific interest.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 28 May 1992]:* No grant as such is payable to an owner or occupier for the establishment of a site of special scientific interest. Where a management agreement, which may involve financial compensation, has been entered into between the former Nature Conservancy Council or its successor bodies and the owner for the conservation of such a site, the details are confidential to the parties. The Buccleuch estate contains various sites of special scientific interest.

## Ancient Woodlands

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it part of his planning policy to prevent any further loss of ancient semi-natural woodland.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 28 May 1992]:* The felling of woodland is not development under the town and country planning system. The protection of ancient woodland will, however, be a material consideration in preparing development plans and determining planning applications. Felling which is undertaken other than for development purposes is effectively controlled through the felling licence system administered by the Forestry Commission. Sites of special scientific interest which may include ancient woodland are given particular protection and development in or near them is strictly controlled.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 24 June 1992*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Interception of Communications

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to improve the safeguards against abuse of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** None. I have every confidence in the existing arrangements for oversight by the Interception of Communications Commissioner and tribunal of the operation of the Act. I refer the hon. Member to the reference in paragraph 7 of the commissioner's report for 1991, Cm 1942, to the determination of the agencies involved in the interception of communications to obey the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

### Prisoners (Labour)

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are, in relation to the last full year for which figures are available, *(a)* the total value of the economic contributions made by prisoners' own labour to the funding of the prison service, *(b)* the value of the sales of goods produced by prison labour to third (outside) parties and *(c)* the proportion which the answers to *(a)* and *(b)* respectively represent of the total annual cost (including depreciation, interest and other capital costs) of the prison service or so much of this information as is available in any form; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The last full year for which figures are available is 1990-91. The information is as follows:
*(a)* £47·6 million; *(b)* £5·7 million; *(c)* 0·03 per cent. *(a)*; 0·004 per cent. *(b)*.

The figures at *(a)* and *(b)* represent the sales value of goods and services applied by prison industrial workshops, laundries, farms and gardens, excluding VAT. They do not include the economic contribution made by inmates working in prison kitchens or engaged in other domestic work, on which information is not available.

The total cost of the Prison Service in 1990-91 was £1,464·2 million. This figure includes capital expenditure, but excludes depreciation and interest on capital employed.

### Dog-fouling

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from local authorities regarding the need to strengthen the ability of local authorities to enforce byelaws about dog-fouling; what consideration he is giving to the introduction of legislation to make the fouling by dogs of footways and other areas to which the public have access, an offence; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** We have received two recent representations from local authorities about the powers available to them to enforce byelaws for the regulation of dogs. I have been informed that the Government Departments concerned are considering whether further legislation on the subject of dog fouling would be appropriate.

### Personal Correspondence

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what powers an immigration officer may copy personal correspondence in the possession of persons applying for temporary visitors' visas on arrival in the United Kingdom; and for how long such copies may be retained by his Department.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Under the Immigration Act 1971 an immigration officer may examine and detain for up to seven days a document produced to him or found on a search.

It is standard practice to photocopy such documents and the copies may be retained as long as considered necessary, but are normally destroyed after three years.

### Police Accommodation

**Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many empty police houses there are for each police authority area; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Details of empty police houses as at 31 March 1991, which are the most recent figures available, are set out in the table. Of the total of 1,614, the number due to be reallocated to serving police officers was 710 and the number identified for sale as surplus to requirements was 517.

*Empty police houses as at 31 March 1991*

| *Police Authority* | *Empty houses* |
|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 38 |
| Bedfordshire | 3 |
| Cambridgeshire | 17 |
| Cheshire | 27 |
| City of London | 0 |
| Cleveland | 2 |
| Cumbria | 65 |
| Derbyshire | 80 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 20 |
| Dorset | 25 |
| Durham | 22 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 34 |
| Essex | 47 |
| Gloucestershire | 35 |
| Greater Manchester | 70 |
| Gwent | 29 |
| Hampshire | 40 |
| Hertfordshire | 17 |
| Humberside | 21 |
| Kent | 40 |
| Lancashire | 61 |
| Leicestershire | 8 |
| Lincolnshire | 34 |
| Merseyside | 7 |
| Norfolk | 11 |
| Northamptonshire | 13 |
| Northumbria | 32 |
| North Wales | 70 |
| North Yorkshire | 42 |
| Nottinghamshire | 14 |
| South Wales | 50 |
| South Yorkshire | 8 |
| Staffordshire | 32 |
| Suffolk | 25 |
| Surrey | 6 |

| Police Authority | Empty houses |
|---|---|
| Sussex | 12 |
| Thames Valley | 56 |
| Warwickshire | 11 |
| West Mercia | 56 |
| West Midlands | 15 |
| West Yorkshire | 9 |
| Wiltshire | 25 |
| Metropolitan Police | [1]385 |
| Total | 1,614 |

[1]Includes flats.

**Mr. Austin Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of empty residential property in the London borough of Greenwich in the ownership of the Metropolitan police and the type of accommodation available; how long each property has been vacant; and what is the intended future use.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information is as follows:

| Property | Type | Number of units | Period vacant months | Future use |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Swanne House | Maisonnette | 3 | 9 | Awaiting allocation |
| Swanne House | Maisonnette | 1 | 4 | Awaiting allocation |
| Swanne House | Maisonnette | 1 | 3 | Awaiting allocation |
| Lynher Lodge | Flat | 1 | 11 | Under review |
| Lynher Lodge | Flat | 1 | 3 | Awaiting allocation |
| Rennetts Wood House | Flat | 2 | 6 | Under review |
| Rennetts Wood House | Flat | 1 | 18 | Under review |
| Rennetts Wood House | Flat | 1 | 1 | Awaiting allocation |
| 6c Vanburgh Park Road | Flat | 1 | 14 | Under review |
| 6d Vanburgh Park Road | Flat | 1 | 6 | Under review |
| Eltham Hill/ Kingsground | Flat | 9 | Withdrawn from allocation prior to disposal | |
| Shooters Hill Road | Flat | 3 | Awaiting conversion for operational use | |

## Asylum

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has held on the provisions of the Asylum Bill to be introduced this Session; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Ministers and officials are frequently in contact with various refugee and voluntary organisations active in the asylum field and are generally familiar with their views. I have had a number of meetings with interested organisations and we are ready to consider any particular points they may wish to raise.

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in respect of reforms to the procedure governing asylum application in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Between July 1991 and April 1992 approximately 2,400 representations were received from hon. Members, interested organisations and members of the public, many being members of organisations such as Amnesty International who sent pro forma letters. Since April we have received approximately 230 representations from members of the public, many forwarded by hon. Members and mostly pro forma letters from Amnesty International members.

## Refugees

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what payments have been made to the new refugee unit, which was formerly part of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Since becoming independent of UKIAS on 6 May, the new refugee unit has received £100,000 in May and £206,250 in June. The sum of £200,000 was given to UKIAS last year to finance the separation costs and the unit was given an additional £33,420 in March when still part of UKIAS.

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with other EC Ministers with regard to refugees from the former state of Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Discussions on the situation of persons displaced by the various conflicts in the region of former Yugoslavia, took place at a meeting of EC Immigration Ministers in Lisbon on 11 and 12 June. Ministers were able to exchange information on how each member state is coping with these problems.

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had on the setting up of the new refugee unit; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) announced on 12 March, at column *592*, that at the joint invitation of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) and the London representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees a planning group was being established to devise a constitution for a new organisation to provide asylum seekers with legal counselling and representation in appeals. My right hon. and learned Friend and I look forward to receiving the group's proposals. In the meantime, the group has assumed responsibility for the general oversight of the refugee unit which was previously part of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service and is now called the new refugee unit. I met Mrs. Usha Prashar, who chairs the group, on 26 May.

# ENVIRONMENT

## Uniform Business Rate

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the length of time being taken over uniform business rate appeals; how many such appeals are pending; what percentage have been pending for over three months, six months and one year, respectively in *(a)* England and *(b)* the Harwich constituency; and what specific steps he is taking to speed up appeals throughout (i) England and (ii) the Harwich constituency.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Non-domestic rating appeals in England are dealt with by valuation tribunals, and those in Harwich by the Essex North valuation tribunal.

Information is not available centrally in the form requested. The available information is as follows:

| | *All tribunals in England* | | *Essex North valuation tribunal including Harwich* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number* | *per cent.* | *Number* | *per cent.* |
| Appeals received | | | | |
| By the end of March 1991 | 597,000 | 77 | 5,800 | 75 |
| During April to September 1991 | 90,000 | 11 | 1,000 | 13 |
| During October 1991 to March 1992 | 92,000 | 12 | 900 | 12 |
| Total | 779,000 | 100 | 7,700 | 100 |
| Total appeals cleared | 220,000 | | 1,500 | |
| Appeals outstanding at end of March 1992 | 558,000 | | 6,200 | |

Most of the original list appeals in 1990-91 were received towards the end of the financial year.

Valuation tribunals are independent bodies and the priority and timing of cases is primarily a matter for them. The Department has, however, urged all tribunals to deal with appeals as quickly as possible.

The Department is responsible for the funding of the English tribunals, and they were provided with additional staff and computer systems for dealing with the 1990 rating appeals. The staffing levels are kept under review.

## Urban Development

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure on each urban development corporation and each urban development area for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The tables show annual grant in aid to the urban development corporations for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

*Grant in aid paid to UDCs 1987-92—£ million*
*Actual outturn (Current Prices)*

| | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black Country | 2·443 | 23·000 | 38·000 | 32·000 | 46·200 |
| Bristol | — | 0·283 | 5·000 | 13·425 | 19·125 |
| Central Manchester | — | 2·500 | 11·000 | 14·000 | 16·000 |
| Leeds | — | 2·743 | 8·750 | 14·000 | 13·600 |
| London Docklands | 82·800 | 116·415 | 225·750 | 332·975 | 248·710 |
| Merseyside | 20·942 | 20·535 | 23·000 | 24·000 | 25·438 |
| Sheffield | — | 7·958 | 9·500 | 18·967 | 13·300 |
| Teesside | 5·000 | 20·697 | 36·009 | 42·135 | 56·230 |
| Trafford Park | 10·450 | 15·500 | 13·300 | 24·200 | 28·100 |
| Tyne and Wear | 4·000 | 24·016 | 35·800 | 37·750 | 40·500 |

*Grant in aid paid to UDCS 1987-1992—£ million 1987-1988 prices*

| | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black Country | 2·443 | 24·662 | 43·428 | 39·556 | 61·123 |
| Bristol | — | 0·303 | 5·714 | 16·599 | 25·302 |
| Central Manchester | — | 2·681 | 12·571 | 17·310 | 21·168 |
| Leeds | — | 2·941 | 9·999 | 17·310 | 17·992 |
| London Docklands | 82·800 | 124·827 | 257·998 | 411·707 | 329·043 |
| Merseyside | 20·942 | 22·019 | 26·286 | 29·674 | 33·651 |
| Sheffield | — | 8·533 | 10·857 | 23·452 | 17·596 |
| Teesside | 5·000 | 22·193 | 41·153 | 52·098 | 74·392 |
| Trafford Park | 10·450 | 16·620 | 15·199 | 29·922 | 37·176 |
| Tyne and Wear | 4·000 | 25·751 | 40·914 | 46·676 | 53·582 |

## Brundtland Commission

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department made to the proceedings of the reconvened Brundtland commission on environment and development in London on 22 to 24 April.

**Mr. Maclean:** My Department contributed £30,000 towards the costs of the London meeting of the World Commission on Environment and Development in April. The Secretary of State for the Environment also hosted a dinner and reception for the commissioners.

## Regional Offices

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure showing the running costs of each regional office of his Department and the cost of running sub-regional offices aggregated by region and with Greater London shown separately and excluding the funding programmes operated by the offices for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Howard:** The costs of running each of my Department's regional offices are set out in the tables. None of these offices has a sub-regional office. Both tables exclude the separate local office networks of Property Holdings and PSAS and, before 1990-91, that of the PSA:

£ million

| Region | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(A) Costs of running each DOE regional office at current prices* | | | | | |
| London | 3·7 | 3·6 | 4·1 | 3·9 | 4·2 |
| South East | 2·7 | 2·4 | 3·0 | 2·9 | 3·3 |
| Eastern | 1·9 | 1·9 | 2·4 | 2·2 | 2·6 |
| South West | 1·9 | 1·7 | 2·1 | 2·1 | 2·5 |
| East Midlands | 2·5 | 2·4 | 3·1 | 2·9 | 3·3 |
| West Midlands | 3·1 | 2·8 | 3·5 | 3·4 | 4·0 |
| North West | 4·4 | 4·2 | 5·3 | 5·5 | 6·4 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 2·8 | 3·0 | 3·6 | 3·6 | 4·4 |
| Northern | 2·7 | 2·6 | 3·3 | 3·2 | 3·7 |
| Merseyside Task Force | 1·5 | 1·5 | 1·7 | 1·7 | 2·1 |
| *(B) Costs of running each DOE regional office at [illegible]-88 prices* | | | | | |
| London | 3·7 | 3·4 | 3·6 | 3·1 | 3·2 |
| South East | 2·7 | 2·3 | 2·6 | 2·4 | 2·5 |
| Eastern | 1·9 | 1·7 | 2·1 | 1·8 | 2·0 |
| South West | 1·9 | 1·6 | 1·9 | 1·7 | 1·9 |
| East Midlands | 2·5 | 2·3 | 2·7 | 2·4 | 2·5 |
| West Midlands | 3·1 | 2·6 | 3·0 | 2·7 | 3·0 |
| North West | 4·4 | 3·9 | 4·6 | 4·4 | 4·9 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 2·8 | 2·8 | 3·2 | 2·9 | 3·4 |
| Northern | 2·7 | 2·5 | 2·9 | 2·6 | 2·8 |
| Merseyside Task Force | 1·5 | 1·4 | 1·5 | 1·4 | 1·6 |

## County Hall, London

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors will be considered in deciding the future use of county hall; and when the matter falls to be determined.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Government will be making a statement on this subject shortly. It will take account of the agreement which the London residuary body have already entered into for the sale of the Riverside building, with an option to withdraw by 31 December of this year, and the financial and wider considerations relating to any alternative proposal for the occupation of the whole county hall site.

## Sites of Special Scientific Interest

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the resources available to English Nature to notify and protect those sites which are of special interest but which await notification or renotification as sites of special scientific interest.

**Mr. Maclean:** Resources for all English Nature's programmes are considered in assessing its corporate plan prior to the annual grant in aid allocation in the autumn. A 13 per cent. increase in grant in aid for 1992-93 was announced last year. The plan for 1993-96 is currently before me.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the chairman of English Nature on the fulfilment of English Nature's statutory duties to notify as sites of special scientific interest those areas of land which in its opinion are of special interest.

**Mr. Maclean:** Ministers from this Department meet the chairman of English Nature on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of issues. I shall be meeting Lord Cranbrook on 8 July to discuss English Nature's corporate plan, which includes the provision to be made for the notification programme.

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many management agreements exist between owners and occupiers of sites of special scientific interest and English Nature; how many agreements have been reached in each of the last five years; and how many are estimated to be made in the current financial year and the next financial year.

**Mr. Maclean:** The information requested is as follows:

| Financial year | New cases | Renewals |
|---|---|---|
| *Numbers reached in the last five years* | | |
| 1987-88 | 273 | — |
| 1988-89 | 313 | — |
| 1989-90 | 221 | — |
| 1990-91 | 323 | — |
| 1991-92 | 271 | 359 |
| *Estimated to be reached* | | |
| 1992-93 | 220 | 330 |
| 1993-94 | 200 | 350 |

*Note:* The number of management agreements reached under section 15 of the Countryside Act 1968 at 31 March 1992 was 1,584.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites are awaiting notification or renotification as sites of special scientific interest; how many are likely to be notified by the end of March 1993; and when the sites of special scientific interest notification programme inherited from the Nature Conservancy Council will be complete.

**Mr. Maclean:** I am advised by English Nature that at 31 March 1992, the renotification of sites in England was 97·7 per cent. complete; 54 sites originally notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 remain to be considered for notification under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. By the end of March 1993 the number of renotified and notified sites is expected to be 3,765. Thereafter, English Nature will notify sites as and when the appropriate scientific interest is identified.

## Water Metering

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines the Office of Water Supply has issued to water companies on fitting water meters to newly constructed properties.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Director General of Water Services has set out charging guidelines for water companies to follow which include the installation of meters where the overall benefit outweighs the cost of installation. Meters can be installed cheaply in new properties and most companies already insist that they are metered. The guidelines encourage all companies to adopt such a policy.

## Housing Finance

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will reconsider their decision to commute present revenue grants for house improvement and slum clearance in favour of a single capital sum payable to local authorities in September.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** No.

## Benzene

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of benzene in petrol in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the United States; and what discussions he will be having with petrol manufacturers to reduce the levels of benzene in petrol.

**Mr. Maclean:** The maximum permissible benzene content of petrol in the United Kingdom is set by European Community directive 85/210/EEC at 5 per cent. by volume. Typical levels in the United Kingdom are between 3 and 4 per cent. and 1 and 2 per cent. in the United States of America. Government action to reduce people's exposure to evaporate emissions of volatile organic compounds, which include benzene, is directed at reducing emissions to the atmosphere. Major reductions will be achieved by new European Community standards on vehicle exhaust emissions which will come into effect from the end of this year; a second stage of even tighter standards is proposed thereafter. Proposals are expected shortly from the European Commission for directives on the control of fuel evaporation in the distribution network and during refuelling operations. The permitted summer time volatility of petrol in the United Kingdom will also be reduced from 1993. The Government are in discussion with both oil and motor industries on these matters.

## Coastal Zone Unit

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to establish a national coastal zone unit within his Department.

**Mr. Maclean:** We have noted the recent recommendation of the report of the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment on coastal zone protection and planning that a national coastal zone unit be set up within the Government to provide an overview of coastal policy. We will be responding to this recommendation, and to the others made by the Committee, in due course.

## Flora and Fauna

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to implement the EC directive on the conservation of flora and fauna and habitats in the United Kingdom; and what additional resources he estimates will be required for this purpose.

**Mr. Maclean:** The United Kingdom's current nature protection provisions give this country a firm basis for implementation of the directive. We are considering what further provisions are necessary to enable the directive to come fully into force within the two years prescribed.

At the same time the Government's scientific advisers are working on the criteria for site selection as the first step towards compiling the United Kingdom's national list of candidate sites to be considered as sites of Community importance.

The resource requirements for implementation over the next few years will be discussed with the country agencies and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee in the context of the normal corporate planning and grant in aid allocation processes.

## Homelessness

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of the number of homeless children in London currently and in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** The information is not held centrally and my Department does not make estimates.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his current estimate of the number of homeless *(a)* in London, *(b)* in Wales and *(c)* in the United Kingdom; what were the comparable figures in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** The available information represents the numbers of households for whom local authorities accepted responsibility for securing permanent accommodation, under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and the Housing Act 1985.

The information for England and London is as follows:

| | *England* | *London* |
|---|---|---|
| 1992[1] | 38,460 | 8,850 |
| 1991 | 145,140 | 39,590 |
| 1982 | 71,620 | 20,630 |

[1] First quarter.

A new reporting system was introduced for authorities other than non-metropolitan districts from the third quarter of 1982 so the figures for the year are not strictly comparable with those for subsequent years.

For information about Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland I refer the hon. and learned Member to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland respectively.

## Darwin Initiative

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the Darwin initiative is expected to take which the United Kingdom has not already been taking through its research and aid programmes; and what is likely to be its cost.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Darwin initiative will assist in carrying out international studies of available natural resources, the building up of inventories of the most important species and the promoting of exchange of information and techniques for conservation.

The aim of the Darwin initiative is to build on the work already being done in the United Kingdom and to develop a new integrated strategy for promoting the protection of biodiversity. We are still considering the resource implications.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what relationship he proposes between the Darwin initiative and the work of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research.

**Mr. Maclean:** We are still considering how to involve existing scientific and environmental groups in the Darwin initiative. However, the work of the consultative group for international agricultural research, which includes the development of higher yield crop varieties and the study of sustainable agricultural practices, shares the same long-term goal of the sustainable use of the world's resources promoted by the Darwin initiative.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what ways he proposes that the Darwin initiative will help the developing countries to obtain compensation for the commercial exploitation of their genetic resources.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Darwin initiative aims to support the implementation of the biodiversity convention. That convention facilitates the setting up of benefit sharing arrangements between countries providing potentially valuable biological resources and those who develop them.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the role of non-governmental organisations in the action team to be established to develop the framework for the Darwin initiative.

**Mr. Maclean:** Interested organisations in the private and public sector, including non-governmental organisations will be invited to help develop the Darwin initiative.

## Biodiversity Convention

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment If he will make a statement on the implications of the EC's signature of the biodiversity convention for the draft directive on patenting of life forms still under discussion in the Community.

**Mr. Maclean:** The European Parliament is presently considering the draft directive on patenting of life forms, in the context of the recently signed biodiversity convention. It is not anticipated that the biodiversity convention will have any significant implications for the draft directive.

## Building Maintenance, Salford

**Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has decided to take against Salford city council following the issue of a notice under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, part III, for its failure to make the statutory rate of return in respect of building maintenance work in 1989-90.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. and learned Friend has given careful consideration to the response which Salford city council has made to the notice served on 1 July 1991, and has today given a direction under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1990 in respect of building maintenance work. The direction places restrictions on the extent of building work undertaken by the authority without the express agreement of the Secretary of State.

## Planning Laws (Crown Exemption)

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to review the exemption of Crown bodies from town and country planning legislation; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir George Young:** Yes. A public consultation paper will be issued in a few weeks' time, embodying detailed proposals by my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, the proposals will also apply to Crown exemption under Scottish planning legislation.

The usual constitutional position is that the Crown is exempt from all statutory provisions, unless they state to the contrary. For this purpose, the Crown includes the Queen, the Prince of Wales, the Crown Estate, Government Departments and Parliament itself. Crown bodies are not entirely exempt from planning legislation; they may, for example, apply for planning permission in anticipation of disposal of their land under section 299 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

But most Crown development, with the exception of trunk roads which are subject to the provisions of the Highways Act 1980, in Scotland the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, is undertaken under non-statutory arrangements set out in part IV of DOE circular 18/84, Welsh Office 37/84. All Crown bodies have agreed to these arrangements, whereby a Crown body that wishes to develop land, obtain listed building consent or acquire hazardous substances consent, serves a notice of proposed development on the local planning authority. Where they and the authority fail to reach agreement, the development proposal is referred to the Secretary of State for decision, if necessary following a non-statutory public local inquiry.

The citizens charter White Paper noted the progressive removal of immunities that shelter Government Departments and Crown bodies from regulations, inspection and enforcement requirements placed on others. My right hon. and learned Friend believes that it is now appropriate to bring Crown exemption under the planning system largely to an end. He proposes that all Crown bodies should be required to apply to the local planning authority for planning permission, listed building consent and hazardous substances consent in the normal way. There will be limited exceptions to this, principally where national or prison security is involved, or for trunk roads proposals, which are already subject to statutory procedures equivalent to town and country planning procedures. One consequence of this proposal will be that Crown developers will be legally required to undertake environmental impact assessments of their proposals, as required by EC directive 85/337, in the same way as other developers, replacing the non-statutory arrangements in DOE circular 15/88—Welsh Office 23/88.

My right hon. and learned Friend also proposes that any Crown development allegedly in breach of planning control should be subject to the enforcement provisions of part VII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; and the statutory regimes in part VIII of that Act for outdoor advertisement control and tree protection should apply to Crown land, with any necessary modifications.

My right hon. and learned Friend intends to embody these proposals in legislation when a suitable opportunity arises.

## Earth Summit

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the 12 representatives of non-governmental organisations and *(b)* representatives of other organisations who attended the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development as advisers to the official United Kingdom delegation.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 15 June, *Official Report*, columns *400-1*.

## Councillors' Allowances

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had in regard to the adequacy of payments to councillors; if there is any action he will be taking to increase their allowances; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* I have received a number of representations from local authorities, local authority associations and from individual councillors. Councillors' allowances are reviewed annually in the light of movements in costs.

## Water Disconnections

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of water supply disconnections in each of the five years prior to water privatisation for each water authority area in England and Wales.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The information the hon. Member requests is set out in the table. Information on disconnections prior to privatisation was only collected by the Department for water authorities as part of the water authorities' annual charges returns. Information on statutory water company disconnections was not collected by the Department prior to 1988-89.

*Disconnections by Water Authorities*

| *Authority* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglian | 218 | 774 | 2,268 | 1,586 | 1,880 |
| North West | 110 | 238 | 457 | 775 | 779 |
| Northumbrian | 70 | 59 | 300 | 480 | 870 |
| Severn Trent | 650 | 1,074 | 1,000 | 932 | 1,101 |
| South West | 76 | 404 | 404 | 324 | 100 |
| Southern | 115 | 1,249 | 1,152 | 1,164 | 1,354 |
| Thames | 788 | 225 | 576 | 1,594 | 935 |
| Welsh | 90 | 350 | 950 | 2,067 | 1,117 |
| Wessex | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32 | 83 |
| Yorkshire | 25 | 189 | 293 | 560 | 999 |
| Total | 2,142 | 4,562 | 7,400 | 9,514 | 9,218 |
| Statutory Water Companies | — | — | — | — | 6,037 |

# HEALTH

## Geriatric Patients

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the average number of days geriatric patients spent in hospital after an operation for each year since 1981.

**Mr. Yeo:** The information requested has been collected centrally only since 1987-88. The first reliable figures were for 1988-89 and are given in the table.

*Average post-operative stay*

| *Year* | *Number of days* |
|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 9·7 |
| 1989-90 | 9·4 |
| 1990-91 | 8·9 |

The information relates to patients over 65.

## T-cell Leukaemia

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will publish the findings of the study undertaken by the North London Blood Transfusions Service on behalf of her Department, into the risks associated with blood transfusions involving human T-cell leukaemia; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 15 June at columns *415-16*.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by regional health authority for the last four years, the number of cases of cancer that have been reported associated with the virus human T-cell leukaemia; and if she will show in her answer the percentage of those cases that proved fatal.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of patients who receive white cell blood transfusions that have not been screened for human T-cell leukaemia.

**Mr. Sackville:** We are not aware of any general medical opinion that such a study would be beneficial.

## Air Pollution

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library the most recent report of the Advisory Committee on Medical Aspects of Air Pollution on the effects of sulphur dioxide.

**Mr. Sackville:** The second report of the Advisory Group on the Medical Aspects of Air Pollution Episodes on sulphur dioxide and acid aerosols is expected to be published later this year. A copy will be placed in the Library.

## NHS Staff (Conflict of Interests)

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what written advice and guidance is given to employees of the national health service including trusts on the conflicts of interest that may arise when they hold a beneficial interest in private care homes or hostels.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Health authorities and trusts as employers are responsible for ensuring that their employees' private interests do not conflict with their public duties. Current guidance issued by the Department in personnel memorandum (86) 7, a copy of which is available in the Library, includes a model contract of employment for general managers of health authorities. This stipulates that the employee must declare to the authority any financial interest or relationship which may affect its policies or decisions.

Advice on professional conduct issued by the General Medical Council recommends that when a doctor refers a patient to a private care home or hostel in which he or she has an interest, the patient must be informed of that interest before the referral is made.

## World Health Organisation

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations she has given to the report by the World Health Organisation Commission on Health and Environment; and what steps she has taken to develop policies to meet the principles set by the Commission.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have welcomed the report. Its proposals are consistent with the Government's policies, as expressed in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" published in September 1990 and with the Department's responsibilities for the promotion and protection of the public health.

## Drug Misuse

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people died from drug misuse in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In 1990, there were 294 deaths registered in the United Kingdom with the underlying cause given as drug dependence or non-dependent abuse of drugs, other than alcohol or tobacco. In addition, it is estimated that there were more than 900 deaths registered where the underlying cause was attributed to poisoning and where drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 were mentioned on the death certificate.

## Electoral Roll

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of electors registered in *(a)* Colne Valley, *(b)* Huddersfield, *(c)* Dewsbury and *(d)* Batley and Spen parliamentary constituencies in each year since 1982.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is shown in the table.

*Parliamentary electors registered in selected constituencies of West Yorkshire, 1983-1992*

*Note: BC = borough constituency; CC = county constituency*

| *Parliamentary constituency* | | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Batley and Spen | BC | 74,699 | 75,131 | 75,435 | 74,953 | 75,334 | 75,987 | 76,125 | 76,327 | 77,486 | 77,381 |
| Colne Valley | CC | 70,455 | 70,502 | 70,789 | 70,827 | 71,057 | 71,658 | 71,755 | 72,079 | 72,948 | 72,935 |
| Dewsbury | CC | 70,623 | 71,028 | 71,879 | 71,656 | 71,838 | 72,183 | 72,315 | 72,575 | 73,767 | 73,816 |
| Huddersfield | BC | 68,951 | 68,814 | 68,609 | 67,215 | 67,247 | 66,983 | 66,121 | 65,921 | 68,272 | 68,324 |

The figures in this table are those supplied by electoral registration officers at the times when the registers come in to use each year.
*Source:* Population estimates unit, OPCS.

## Benzene

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department (1) will investigate the link between childhood leukaemia and benzene; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will conduct a study into the number of leukaemia cases resulting from exposure to benzene resulting from petrol fumes.

**Mr. Sackville:** Benzene is toxic at high doses and is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer—IARC—as a human carcinogen, being associated with blood disorders and leukaemia. The IARC advises on whether a chemical is carcinogen from animal studies and human data.

The Department's independent expert advisory Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment discussed the question of the carcinogenic effects of benzene, in relation to not only levels in petrol, but the whole range of sources of exposure of the general population, at its meetings in 1990 and 1991. The committee's conclusions were:

"Benzene was genotoxic and shown to be carcinogenic in humans. No threshold for carcinogenicity had been demonstrated and therefore there is no entirely safe level with regard to carcinogenic effects. There is evidence of increased

incidence rates for various leukaemias, mainly non-lymphocytic, in occupational groups exposed to levels in the 10-20 ppm range".

People's exposure to benzene is greatest at petrol stations, but is of short duration. The exposure of the general population to benzene from all sources combined is very low compared with that of special occupational groups. Studies of these groups have shown that health effects attributable to benzene are difficult to assess. It is therefore not possible, on present information, to establish any direct link between the increased incidence of leukaemia or mortality in children or adults and environmental exposure to benzene.

The Department, in conjunction with several other Government Departments, is funding research by the small area health statistics unit, which is an independent body based at the London school of hygiene and tropical medicine. It has built up a comprehensive database on the distribution of mortality, by specified cause, and on the incidence of cancer related to small areas of the country. It is currently undertaking studies of the incidence of mortality and cancer in the neighbourhood of industrial installations, including benzene works.

### Cooking and Catering

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that adults with learning difficulties are not precluded from participating in cooking and catering duties by the application of food hygiene regulations consequential on the Food Safety Act 1990.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 June at column *708*.

### NHS Patients

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that patients at present being cared for within national health service provision will not be discharged into the independent sector without their agreement.

**Mr. Yeo:** Guidance issued to health authorities in February 1989 HC(89)5 a copy of which is available in the Library, makes it clear that patients must not be placed in private nursing or residential homes against their wishes if it means that they, or their relatives, will be personally responsible for any charges.

### Health Authorities (Audit Reports)

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will place in the Library copies of the annual profiles of comparative activity by all health authorities prepared by the Audit Commission and resulting from the reports of local auditors;

(2) what information from the Audit Commission she has made available to Parliament to enable comparative assessment to be made of the activities of health authorities.

**Mr. Sackville:** We are in correspondence with the chairman of the Audit Commission to clarify and agree future engagements for the publication of comparative information on health service activity. In this context we will consider with the commission how the profiles of health authority expenditure, prepared by staff of the commission, can best serve the need for high-quality comparative information which is a key element in providing greater patient choice and in the successful operation of the reforms.

The Department publishes each year an extensive range of comparative data on many aspects of the health service in the form of health service indicators. The indicators for 1990-91 will be published and placed in the Library next month to enable comparative assessments to be made of health authority activities.

### Human Genetics

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *129*, by what methods Her Majesty's Government are keeping a close watch on developments in human genetics.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Government are monitoring these developments by a number of means. Scientific and medical staff keep up to date through professional literature and close links with medical scientists. Government Departments maintain long-standing contacts with representative patient, professional and international organisations. These include the Medical Research Council and its scientific boards, the Nuffield Foundation which last year set up the Nuffield Council of Bioethics, the Council of Europe and the European Community.

I would also refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the then Minister of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 17 January at column *675*, in which she announced a wide consultation on the report of the Committee on the Ethics of Gene Therapy. The consultation period ended on 18 May 1992 and all the comments will be carefully considered before the Government formulate their response to the report.

### GPs (Computers)

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much was allocated by each family health services authority to *(a)* fund-holding general practices and *(b)* non-fund-holding general practices for the purposes of funding computer equipment in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(2) whether she will list the allocation of funds to each FHSA in the Wessex region for the purposes of funding computer equipment in general practices in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not held centrally.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** There are no bilateral treaties recorded with Liechtenstein. The information requested on Switzerland is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the Council of Europe conventions to which the United Kingdom and *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein are signatories.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** There are 42 conventions to which the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are all signatories. The United Kingdom and Switzerland are both signatories to a further 29 conventions and the United Kingdom and Liechtenstein one further convention.

The table lists these conventions.

1. *Conventions to which the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are signatories.*

Statute of the Council of Europe.

General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe.

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Protocol to the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe.

European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities.

European Cultural Convention.

European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study.

Second Protocol to the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe.

European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes.

European Convention on Extradition.

European Agreement on the Exchange of Therapeutic Substances of Human Origin.

European Agreement of the Abolition of Visas for Refugees.

European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications.

European Social Charter[1 3].

Fourth Protocol to the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe.

European Agreement on the Exchanges of Blood-Grouping Reagents.

Protocol No. 2 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Conferring upon the European Court of Human Rights Competence to give Advisory Opinions.

Protocol No. 3 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Amending Articles 29, 30 and 34 of the Convention.

Convention on the Unification of Certain Points of Substantive Law on Patents for Invention.

Protocol to the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities.

European Agreement for the Prevention of Broadcasts Transmitted from Stations outside National Territories.

Protocol No. 5 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Amending Articles 22 and 40 of the Convention.

European Convention on the Adoption of Children.

European Convention on Information of Foreign Law.

European Convention on the Abolition of Legalisation of Documents Executed by Diplomatic Agents or Consular Officers.

European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.

European Agreement Relating to Persons Participating in Proceedings of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights.

European Agreement on Continued Payment of Scholarships to Students Studying Abroad.

European Convention on the Social Protection of Farmers.

European Agreement on the Exchange of Tissue-Typing Reagents.

Additional Protocol to the European Agreement on the Exchange of Tissue-Typing Reagents.

European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism.

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children.

Additional Protocol to the European Agreement on the Exchange of Therapeutic Substances of Human Origin.

Additional Protocol to the European Agreement on the Exchanges of Blood-Grouping Reagents.

Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

Protocal No. 8 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

European Convention on Transfrontier Television.[3]

Anti-Doping Convention.[2 3]

2. *Conventions to which the United Kingdom and Switzerland are Signatories.*

European Convention for the Protection of Animals for Slaughter.[1 2]

European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes.[1 2]

Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime.[1 2]

European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised).[1 2]

Protocol No. 10 to the ECHR[1 2]

European Convention Relating to the Formalities Required for Patent Applications.

European Convention on the International Classification of Patents for Invention.

European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.

Agreement on the Temporary Importation, Free of Duty, of Medical, Surgical and Laboratory Equipment for Use on Free Loan in Hospitals and other Medical Institutions for Purposes of Diagnosis or Treatment.

European Agreement on Travel by Young Persons on Collective Passports between the Member Countries of the Council of Europe.

European Code of Social Security.

Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia.

European Agreement on the Instruction and Education of Nurses.

European Agreement on the Restriction of the Use of Certain Detergents in Washing and Cleaning Products.

European Convention for the Protection of Animals During International Transport.

European Convention on State Immunity.

European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock.

European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes.

European Agreement on the Transmission of Applications For Legal Aid.[2]

Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Information on Foreign Law.

Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters.[2]

Additional Protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals During International Transport.

European Agreement on Transfer of Responsibility for Refugees.

Additional Protocol to the Agreement on the Temporary Importation Free of Duty of Medical, Surgical and Laboratory Equipment for use on Free Loan in Hospitals and Medical Institutions for Diagnosis or Treatment.

Protocol Amending the European Agreement on the Restriction of the use of Certain Detergents in Washing and Cleaning Products.[2]

European Convention on the Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes.

European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular at Football Matches.

European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International non-Governmental Organisations.

Protocol to the Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopeia.

3. *Convention to which the United Kingdom and Liechtenstein are signatories*

Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe.

[1] Denotes that United Kingdom has signed but not ratified this Convention.

[2] Denotes that Switzerland has signed but not ratified this Convention.

[3] Denotes that Liechtenstein has signed but not ratified this Convention.

## Cyprus

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the land area of the island of Cyprus is administered by *(a)* the Government of the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Government of President George Vassiliou, the Greek Cypriot leader and *(c)* the Government of Mr. Rauf Denktas, the Turkish Cypriot leader.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The figures for the respective categories are approximately:

*(a)* 3 per cent.
*(b)* 57 per cent.
*(c)* 38 per cent.

An additional 2 per cent. lies in the United Nations-controlled buffer zone. We do not recognise the area under de facto Turkish Cypriot administration as forming in any sense a separate sovereign state.

## Lockerbie Bombing

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Spanish Government on the legal proceedings being taken against Monzer al-Kassar in Spain, in relation to Lockerbie.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I have had no such discussions.

There is no evidence to link Monzer al-Kassar to the Lockerbie bombing.

## Bhutan

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and the Government of Bhutan.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have no diplomatic relations with Bhutan, but maintain friendly contacts mainly through our high commission in New Delhi.

## East Timor

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position in the European Community on human rights issues in East Timor.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We share the concerns expressed by the European Community about the human rights situation in East Timor. The United Kingdom, with Community partners, condemned the killings in Dili last year. We fully endorse the view—agreed by all Community countries—that our continuing concerns about the situation there should be conveyed directly to the Indonesians.

## South Africa

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the recent Amnesty International report on South African security force complicity in torture and political killings; and what action he intends to take.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Her Majesty's Government are aware of the Amnesty International report on South Africa. We have consistently taken the view that the South African Government must accept primary responsibility for maintaining law and order and should investigate allegations of misconduct by members of the security forces promptly and thoroughly. We have also given practical support to Judge Goldstone's commission of inquiry which is currently examining many of the allegations in the Amnesty report.

## Diego Garcia

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations were made by groups from Mauritius and the Seychelles, to the Minister for Overseas Development in Rio de Janeiro about trust funds for the Ilois from Diego Garcia; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** No representations were made by these groups to the Minister for Overseas Development in Rio de Janeiro.

## Stranded Citizens (Support)

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what circumstances financial assistance is denied to British citizens stranded outside the United Kingdom where no alternative means of support is immediately available.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** British citizens who, through unforeseen circumstances, are without funds overseas and who have no other identifiable source of help may as a last resort be given a repayable loan to enable them to return to the United Kingdom. This facility, for which a fee is levied, is not normally available to certain categories, including British nationals normally resident overseas and dual nationals in the country of their second nationality.

# WALES

## Contaminated Land

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the evidentiary basis for the statement at page 64 of his Department's survey of contaminated land in Wales, August 1988, that certain areas of the site of the former explosives factory at Pembry, Dyfed are known to be contaminated with phenols and that some remedial measures have been attempted;

(2) what was the evidentiary basis for the statement at page 50, paragraph 6, Llanelli, of his Department's survey

of contaminated land in Wales, final report, March 1984, that certain areas of the site of the former explosives factory at Pembrey, Dyfed are known to be contaminated with phenols and that some remedial measures have been attempted.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The surveys were based on desk studies using information from a range of reference sources. Detailed site surveys were not undertaken; instead, information on potential contaminants at individual locations was usually based on known past uses of the land and the materials normally associated with those uses.

**Mr. Denzil Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the categories of phenols which are known to his Department to be contaminating the site of the former explosives factory at Pembrey, as stated in his Department's surveys of contaminated land in Wales;

(2) if he will describe the remedial measures which have been attempted in respect of the phenols which are contaminating certain areas of the site of the former explosives factory at Pembrey as described in hs Department's surveys of contaminated land in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** This information is not held by the Welsh Office. However, as is indicated on page 15 of the report "Survey of Contaminated Land in Wales, March 1984", phenol in the soil normally dissipates as a result of leaching and natural degradation. This is something the sampling programme recently commissioned by Llanelli borough council can be expected to check.

## Cooking and Catering

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that adults with learning difficulties in Wales are not precluded from participating in cooking and catering duties by the application of food hygiene regulations consequential on the Food Safety Act 1990.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Food Safety Act does not prohibit anyone from preparing their own meals or beverages. The Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, as amended, set out the controls necessary for the hygienic preparation of food other than in domestic settings. Environmental health departments advise on controls bearing in mind the nature of any food safety risk, including the type of food handled and the preparation included. Adults with learning difficulties can participate in cooking and catering duties if the hygiene controls can be satisfied.

## Elderly People

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the best estimate of the current number of elderly people *(a)* aged over 85 years, *(b)* aged 75 to 85 years and *(c)* aged 65 to 75 years in (i) Wales as a whole, (ii) in each county in Wales and (iii) in each district in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The 1990 mid-year estimates of population, produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, of age groups over 85, 75 to 84 and 65 to 74 for the counties and county districts of Wales are given in the table:

| | *85+* | *75-84* | *65-74* |
|---|---|---|---|
| WALES | 44,500 | 161,700 | 274,100 |
| Clwyd | 6,900 | 24,400 | 39,000 |
| Dyfed | 5,600 | 21,400 | 36,800 |
| Gwent | 6,200 | 23,100 | 41,100 |
| Gwynedd | 4,900 | 16,000 | 24,500 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 6,800 | 27,300 | 48,300 |
| Powys | 1,800 | 7,300 | 12,200 |
| South Glamorgan | 6,500 | 21,000 | 35,800 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,900 | 21,300 | 36,300 |
| Alyn and Deeside | 800 | 3,400 | 6,100 |
| Colwyn | 1,300 | 4,300 | 6,300 |
| Delyn | 900 | 3,400 | 5,800 |
| Glyndwr | 700 | 2,800 | 4,400 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,400 | 4,400 | 6,200 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 1,700 | 6,100 | 10,300 |
| Carmarthen | 800 | 3,500 | 6,300 |
| Ceredigion | 1,300 | 4,300 | 7,100 |
| Dinefwr | 600 | 2,400 | 4,100 |
| Llanelli | 1,500 | 5,000 | 8,500 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 900 | 3,800 | 6,800 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 600 | 2,300 | 3,900 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 1,300 | 4,600 | 7,600 |
| Islwyn | 1,200 | 3,600 | 6,200 |
| Monmouth | 1,100 | 4,300 | 7,400 |
| Newport | 1,500 | 6,300 | 11,500 |
| Torfaen | 1,100 | 4,400 | 8,400 |
| Aberconwy | 1,400 | 4,400 | 6,300 |
| Arfon | 1,000 | 3,200 | 4,900 |
| Dwyfor | 600 | 2,000 | 3,200 |
| Meirionnydd | 800 | 2,300 | 3,500 |
| Ynys Mon | 1,200 | 4,100 | 6,600 |
| Cynon Valley | 1,000 | 3,800 | 6,500 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 900 | 3,200 | 5,500 |
| Ogwr | 1,600 | 7,000 | 12,400 |
| Rhondda | 1,300 | 4,900 | 8,000 |
| Rhymney Valley | 1,000 | 4,500 | 8,300 |
| Taff-Ely | 1,000 | 4,000 | 7,600 |
| Brecknock | 600 | 2,600 | 4,500 |
| Montgomeryshire | 800 | 3,100 | 5,200 |
| Radnorshire | 300 | 1,600 | 2,500 |
| Cardiff | 4,700 | 15,300 | 25,700 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 1,700 | 5,700 | 10,200 |
| Port Talbot | 800 | 2,900 | 5,200 |
| Lliw Valley | 1,100 | 3,800 | 6,300 |
| Neath | 1,100 | 3,900 | 6,500 |
| Swansea | 3,000 | 10,700 | 18,200 |

*Note:* Figures may not add up due to rounding.

## Water Quality

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on water quality in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The National Rivers Authority's 1990 survey of river quality shows that 94 per cent. of river lengths in its Welsh region are of good or fair quality. A total of 90 per cent. of the 50 bathing waters on the Welsh coastline identified under the EC directive met its stringent mandatory standards for total coliforms and faecal coliforms last year. As regards drinking water quality, the first annual report of the drinking water inspectorate published last year confirms that of the tests of water quality carried out in 1990 by Dwr Cymru Cyf, 99 per cent. complied with the rigorous statutory standards set in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 1989, SI 1989 No. 1147. Meanwhile, Dwr Cymru is continuing with the implementation of its 10-year, £1·8 billion capital investment programme aimed at achieving further improvement to the standards of drinking water, river and coastal water quality.

## Local Management of Schools

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the effects of local management of schools on remedial schools in Wales and, in particular, how it has affected teacher/student ratios over the last two years.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Welsh Office circular 38/91 required local education authorities to submit by 30 September 1993, at the latest, proposals to extend their LMS schemes to special schools so that they can be funded by LMS formulae. No proposals have been received to date.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the effects of local management of schools on *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Wales over the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** As at 1 April 1992, more than 650 primary schools and around 200 secondary schools were in receipt of delegated powers. The heads and governors of these schools can decide for themselves how best to use their budgets to meet priorities within their schools and the needs of individual pupils. It is our intention that all schools will be in a similar position by April 1995.

Many of the initial doubts and concerns raised with me about LMS have now been dispelled, but there are still some issues that I consider need further evaluation. While circular 36/88 required all local education authorities to review their schemes after three years, it is my intention that the Welsh Office should itself look again in detail at the LMS arrangements. As part of this review, I have commissioned the consultants, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, to provide an overview of how LMS is developing in Wales and to suggest areas where improvements can be considered. Their findings will be circulated to LEAs and other interested parties for comment. A copy will also be placed in the Library of the House.

## Pre-school Education

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the level of pre-school education provision in Clwyd;

(2) what pre-school education provision is available in each Welsh county; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the level of pre-school education provision in Powys;

(4) if he will make a statement on pre-school education provision in Dyfed;

(5) if he will make a statement on the level of pre-school education provision in Gwynedd.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to table 2.04 of "Statistics of Education in Wales: Schools"—No. 5, 1991—a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The provision of education in school for children under five years old is at the discretion of local education authorities.

## Postbus

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to fund the expansion of postbus services in Wales; and if he will make a statement on further improvements in the postbus services.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** No. This is a matter for the Post Office.

## Afon Conwy

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans for the improvement of sewage outfall arrangements affecting the Afon Conwy following the construction of the Conwy tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** As part of its programme of improvements to sewage discharges affecting EC identified bathing waters, Dwr Cymru is undertaking a major scheme, due for completion in about two years and costing approximately £12 million, to intercept 11 discharges currently made into the Afon Conwy. The effluent will be pumped to a sewage treatment works and discharged via a 4·5 km long sea outfall. In addition, some other works further upstream on the Afon Conwy are being improved to meet standards set by the National Rivers Authority.

## Reservoirs

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fresh water reservoirs in Wales have been tainted with toxic algae blooms since April; what are the comparable figures for April to June 1991; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The National Rivers Authority is engaged in developing action plans to deal with the problem of potentially toxic blue-green algal. The authority first undertook extensive monitoring to identify those lakes and reservoirs at risk of developing toxic blue-green algae blooms. It issued public information leaflets and, when blooms have occurred, gave advice to the owners, water users and local authorities affected. The NRA no longer considers that it needs to undertake routine monitoring and is now concentrating its efforts on a major research programme to develop ways of dealing with blue-green algae. Recent monitoring has focused on those waters not previously sampled or not previously found to have abundant populations of algae but where the presence of algae is now being reported. The data from such monitoring does not therefore provide a comprehensive assessment of the extent of blue-green algae blooms, nor information which is comparable with data collected in previous years.

## Cardiff Bay Barrage

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, columns *612-13*, what proposals he has for a further re-advertisement of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage in the supplement to the *Official Journal* of the European Communities utilising the amended figure of £106 million as the estimated cost; what consultations he has had with the European regional development fund concerning grant aid for the barrage proposal; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** As I explained in my answer of 16 June 1992, the figure in the pre-qualification notice is intended to be purely indicative. Cardiff Bay development corporation has no plans to publish a further notice. An

application for assistance from the European regional development fund could not be made before the Bill had received Royal Assent.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 18 June, *Official Report*, column *613*, for what reason it was decided to increase the quantity of structural concrete from 125,000 $m^3$ to 140,000 $m^3$ and the amount of steel sheet piling from 17,000 tonnes to 20,000 tonnes between the original advertisement in the supplement to the *Official Journal* of the European Communities dated 14 November 1990 and the most recent re-advertisement dated 5 June 1992.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The estimated quantities of both steel sheet piling and concrete have increased in the course of the detailed design of the barrage. In addition, the amount of sheet piling was increased following agreement with the National Rivers Authority on the requirements of the fish pass.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with *(a)* Mr. Ray Stoner, *(b)* the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation, *(c)* Cardiff city council engineering department and *(d)* the National Rivers Authority concerning the estimated likely date of completion of the studies into dewatering wells and retrofitted land drains as a means of deflecting the side-effects of rising groundwater from the proposed Cardiff Bay barrage; and what proposals he has for consultation on and publication of such proposals.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Study of the feasibility of dewatering wells is continuing and I shall publish a report when the work is completed. I shall be seeking the views of Mr. Stoner, the CBDC, Cardiff city council and the NRA on the results. It would not be appropriate to pursue the option of retrofitting land drains in advance of the outcome of the dewatering studies.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further information he has on the choice, evaluation, attraction and development of "people draw" activities under the aegis of Cardiff Bay development corporation used in pursuance of the £25 million total expenditure allocated for that purpose in annexes C and D of the financial memorandum of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The financial memorandum of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill does not mention £25 million to be allocated to "people draw" activities. I believe the hon. Gentleman to be referring to annexes C and D of the letter of 13 December 1990 sent by the previous Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands).

Cardiff Bay development corporation intends the major "people draw" activity in this area to be a national science centre based on Techniquest. Proposals for the next stage of development are currently being considered.

### Waste Water Treatment

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the National Rivers Authority Wales region and Welsh Water plc concerning the implementation in Wales of the EC municipal waste water treatment directive; when he expects to publish firm proposals on the definition of sensitive waters, treatment standards, dilution factors and other relevant criteria for compliance; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Considerable progress has been made within the United Kingdom towards implementing the urban waste water treatment directive—UWWTD. A working group, whose membership includes representatives from the National Rivers Authority, the water companies and the relevant Government Departments, including the Welsh Office, is drawing up a national implementation programme to be established by the end of 1993. The directive's provisions have, wherever possible, been incorporated into the on-going investment programmes being undertaken by the water companies, including Dwr Cymru, to improve those sewage discharges adversely affecting EC identified bathing waters. Interim advice on applying UWWTD standards in consents to discharge to coastal and territorial waters has been issued by Government to the National Rivers Authority. The UWWTD requires member states to identify sensitive and less sensitive areas also by the end of next year: the Welsh Office, jointly with Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, issued a consultation paper last March about the criteria and procedures to be used to identify those areas, and the responses received are now being considered.

## PRIME MINISTER

### EC Presidency

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the cost of (i) each of the special presidency events and (ii) each of the other special events that will be incurred by the United Kingom as set out in the booklet "The United Kingdom Presidency of the European Community".

**The Prime Minister:** Of the 79 special events listed in the United Kingdom presidency programme booklet, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is providing funding support for 11 at a total cost of £315,426. These are:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Presidency Art Exhibition, Brussels | 100,500 |
| Britain and Europe Summer School, LSE | 5,000 |
| European Night at the Proms, Albert Hall | 22,776 |
| UK Presidency Conference, QEII Centre | 113,650 |
| EC R&D meeting of Chief Scientists and European Parliament Committee, Edinburgh | 5,000 |
| Women of Europe Awards, FCO | 2,000 |
| EC Organ Festival, Bolton | 15,000 |
| Association of European Journalists Conference | 7,000 |
| Advent for Europe Concert, Durham | 5,000 |
| New Year's Eve Festival and Concert, Barbican | 35,000 |
| Beacon Europe, throughout Europe | 5,000 |

Other Government Departments and the EC Commission are helping to organise or finance a further 32 events. EC ministerial meetings in the UK, including the European Council, are being funded from the FCO presidency budget of £9·8 million.

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the Prime Minister how many events in the calendar of special events for the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community are taking place in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The presidency programme booklet includes two events in

Wales, the informal meeting of EC Employment and Social Affairs Ministers in Chepstow and the presidency concert at the Llangollen international eisteddfod. Further events in Wales are planned but not yet confirmed.

In addition, the European arts festival includes 58 events in Wales and Beacon Europe will take place throughout the United Kingdom.

## Death Penalty

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to abolish the death penalty for those offences for which it remains in force in England and Wales.

**The Prime Minister:** The abolition of the death penalty is a matter which only Parliament can decide, each Member of Parliament voting according to his or her conscience. The Government have to abide by the decision of the House of Commons, which voted against the abolition of the death penalty during the last debate on capital punishment in December 1990.

## Child Health

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken, or will be taking, to promote as a priority the plan of action for survival, protection and development of children, agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Harare in 1991, for improving child health in Commonwealth countries in the present decade; what information he has received from other Commonwealth countries in regard to implementing the plan of action; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** I presume that the right hon. Member is referring to the plan of action adopted by the World Summit for Children in 1990.

In response to the summit's call for national plans of action, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in conjunction with other Departments, has compiled a report, which was presented to the UNICEF secretariat at the end of February, outlining our policies for children in this country and the work of the United Kingdom's aid programme of particular relevance to women and children in the third world. The report examines problem areas which persist in developed, industrialised societies and explains what measures the Government are taking to alleviate them in this country; and it reviews those areas of the United Kingdom's aid programme such as primary health care, water and sanitation, and education which are of greatest direct impact on women and children in the developing countries.

We plan to publish the report as a Command Paper before the end of the month.

We understand that Commonwealth states are at various stages of preparation in work on their national reports.

## Nuclear Testing

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with the United States Administration during his recent visit to Washington about the resumption of nuclear testing by the United Kingdom.

**The Prime Minister:** I had discussions on a range of matters with President Bush and other members of the US Administration. The Government's position on nuclear testing remains as I stated in my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 12 May at column 90.

## Libya

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his discussions with the French Government about United Nations sanctions against Libya.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* We have co-operated closely with France on this issue. Sanctions will remain in force until Libya has complied in full with UN Security Council resoluton 731, including handing over the Lockerbie suspects for trial in Scotland or the United States and meeting French demands over the UTA bombing.

## Treaty of Rome

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the privileges of British troops serving in other EC countries when the proposed article 8 of the treaty of Rome comes into force.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The privileges enjoyed by British troops serving in other EC countries are a matter for the Government and the Government of the member state concerned. Bilateral and multilateral arrangements apply. This provision will not be affected by the entry into force of the proposed new article 8 of the treaty of Rome.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the diplomatic and other privileges of the European Commission and its employees when the proposed revised article 8 of the treaty of Rome enters into force.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The privileges and immunities of members of the Commission staff are governed by the protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities 1965, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. These privileges and immunities are not altered by the proposed new article 8 of the treaty of Rome.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will equalise the tax treatment of United Kingdom and other EC nationals when the proposed article 8b of the treaty of Rome on the right to vote in municipal elections takes effect.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The provisions concerning the right to vote in municipal elections have no implications for the basis of tax liability in this country, which will continue to be primarily determined by the residence status and domicile of each individual.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the diplomatic and other privileges of national representatives working in other member states when the proposed article 8 of the treaty of Rome enters into force.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* Such privileges are a matter for agreement between the

Governments of the member states concerned and relevant multilateral agreements. None of the existing arrangements will be affected by the entry into force of the proposed new article 8 of the treaty of Rome.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the Government's reasons for agreeing to dual citizenship of nationals of the United Kingdom under the proposed article 8 of the treaty of Rome.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The proposed new article 8 of the treaty of Rome would confer upon EC nationals limited additional rights, as citizens of the union, defined in the articles which follows. The Government consider that all these rights would confer worthwhile benefit upon United Kingdom citizens. The addition of further rights would require unanimity and national ratification.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister how he proposes to define the purposes of the proposed articles 8a and 8b of the treaty of Rome; and what legislative or other proposals he has to enable electoral registration officers to know whether a national of another member state is a resident for the purpose of these articles.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The proposed article 8A of the treaty of Rome to be added by the treaty on European union in itself establishes no new rights. Unanimity is required in the Council for any measures to facilitate the exercise of these existing rights or to expand them. No such proposals have been suggested. Proposed article 8b of the treaty of Rome makes it clear that the rights to vote and stand in municipal elections described therein should be exercised under the same conditions as enjoyed by nationals of the member state in question. In the United Kingdom registration on the electoral roll is sufficient proof of resident status for the purpose of voting and standing in elections.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister what proposals he has to revise the oath of allegiance to give effect to the proposed article 8 of the treaty of Rome.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* None. The concept of citizenship of the union confers an additional status on British citizens, and does not replace British citizenship or affect allegiance to the Crown.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister to which Department he proposes to transfer responsibility for relationships with the European Community if the proposed article 8 of the treaty of Rome enters into force.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The Government have no such plans.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister what consideration he gave to proposing that the new article 3b of the treaty of Rome should be given retrospective effect.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The proposed article 3b of the treaty of Rome will have effect only when the treaty on European union enters into force. All Community institutions, including the European Court of Justice, will then be under a binding obligation to respect the principle of subsidiarity which it contains. There is, however, nothing to prevent the institutions operating in this way voluntarily, in advance of article 3b coming into effect. As presidency of the Community, the United Kingdom will encourage them to do so. There is evidence that the Commission is already doing this.

### European Monetary System

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the legal basis for the European monetary system; and whether its status will be changed if the Maastricht treaty takes effect.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The European monetary system is established by a resolution of the European Council. Its legal status will not be changed if the treaty on European union agreed at Maastricht takes effect.

### EC Citizenship

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the level of public support for the creation of Community citizenship by the Maastricht treaty.

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The Maastricht treaty as a whole is a good agreement for Britain, and has been commended by Parliament. The establishment of the concept of citizenship of the union will be helpful in ensuring that the position of individual citizens within the Community is respected and enhanced, in the areas in question—limited voting rights and consular protection.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Scientific Research

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what scientific research is being sponsored into the origins of life and the beginnings of the universe.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Science and Engineering Research Council supports a number of projects in these areas through its research grant programme and through access to major observational and experimental facilities.

Research relating to the origins of life includes work in molecular biology and genetics which will allow scientists to search for the earliest evidence from fossil and geological records of simple proteins, metabolic pathways and early microbe forms.

Research into the origins and history of the universe, in which United Kingdom scientists play a leading role, includes:

High-energy particle physics at CERN and elsewhere where research into the structure of matter and the way it interacts provides information on the very early development of the universe.

Observational astrophysics using both ground-based and space-launched telescopes. The former includes those on La Palma and in Hawaii; and plans are well advanced for two new large optical telescopes to be built in collaboration with the United States of America and Canada. Space-based observation is supported through the United Kingdom's membership of the European Space Agency and by collaboration with other agencies such as NASA.

Research into the detection of "Dark Matter" (at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and Imperial College) and into Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (at Cambridge and Jodrell Bank).

A number of theoretical reseach programmes including studies in quantum gravity and mathematical astrophysics.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Departmental Staff

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

**Mr. Nelson:** The responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in the Treasury are as follows. The information on the numbers of staff reporting to each is contained in the table.

Deputy Secretary (Overseas Finance):
Responsible for:
- European Community Group
- Aid and Export Finance Group
- International Finance Group

Deputy Secretary (Public Finance):
Responsible for:
- Fiscal Policy Group
- Monetary Policy Group

Deputy Secretary (Public Services):
Responsible for:
- Local Government Group
- Health, Social Services and Territorial Group
- Running Costs Division (part)
- Central Unit on Purchasing (also has responsibility for CCTA which is to be transferred to the Office for Public Services and Science in due course)

Deputy Secretary (Civil Service Management and Pay):
Responsible for:
- Pay Group
- Personnel Policy Group
- Management Policy and Running Costs Group
- CS Catering Organisation (Forward)

Deputy Secretary (Industry):
Responsible for:
- Public Enterprises Group
- Industry, Agriculture and Employment Group
- Home and Education Group

Deputy Secretary (Financial Institutions and Markets):
Responsible for:
- Banking Group
- Securities and Investment Services Group (formerly the Financial Service Division of the DTI, transferred to the Treasury in June 1992).

| *Grade* | *DS Overseas finance* | *DS Public finance* | *DS Public services* | *DS CS Management and pay* | *DS Industry* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| G4 | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| G5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 11 | 7 |
| G6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| G7 | 17 | 9 | 16 | 42 | 17 |
| SEO | 3 | 1 | 6 | 37 | 3 |
| HEO | 4 | 1 | 10 | 30 | 13 |
| HEO(D) | 2 | 1 | 2 | — | 1 |
| AT | — | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| EO | 9 | 4 | 8 | 45 | 10 |
| SAS | — | — | — | 27 | — |
| AS | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| SSO | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| HSO | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| SEA | 2 | 4 | — | — | — |
| EA | 3 | — | — | — | — |
| AO | 11 | 6 | 10 | 43 | 16 |
| AA | 4 | 3 | 7 | 17 | 6 |
| SPS | 1 | — | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| PS | 11 | 8 | 9 | 16 | 10 |
| Typist | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| SB2 | — | — | 1 | 1 | — |
| Total | 81 | 48 | 87 | 265 | 97 |

*Notes:*
1. Staff in post figures as at 1 June 1992, except for financial services command which includes latest estimate of staff being transferred from DTI.
2. Figures for part-time staff rounded down.
3. In addition to the above staff there are 761 staff in the following commands: First Permanent Secretary, Second Permanent Secretary responsible for Public Expenditure (ie, the General Expenditure Policy Group and the Defence Policy and Material Group), Chief Economic Adviser, Chief Accountancy Adviser and the Establishments and Organisation Group.

### RPI Advisory Committee

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will consider transferring the functions of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee to the Central Statistical Office.

**Mr. Nelson:** The position is set out in the agency framework document of the Central Statistical Office, copies of which are available in the Library:

"The scope and definition of the [Retail Prices] Index continue to be a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Director [of the CSO] will continue to take the lead in advising on methodological questions concerning the RPI and to chair an RPI Advisory Committee to which the Chancellor will refer issues for consideration as appropriate."

I am satisfied with this arrangement.

### Missile Technology

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how may prosecutions Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Department has initiated against United Kingdom companies since 1987 for breaching the provisions of the missile technology control regime.

**Sir John Cope:** The United Kingdom's obligations under the missile technology control regime are included, with obligations under other non-proliferation regimes, in the restrictions imposed under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1991. Exportation of some goods can contravene more than one of these regimes. Prosecutions are based on breaches of the Export of Goods Control Order and customs records do not therefore identify which underlying non-proliferation regime is concerned.

### Carbon Tax

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what use is scheduled for the revenue from a carbon tax under the current proposals.

**Sir John Cope:** The European Community Commission has recently prepared a draft directive for the Council's consideration. We have just received an official copy of the draft directive and will need to examine details of it carefully. The introduction of a tax along the lines the Commission proposes would require the unanimous agreement of all 12 member states. The Government have taken no decisions as to the use to be made of the revenues to the Exchequer which such a tax would produce.

### Trades Unions

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often in the calendar years 1990 and 1991 he met trades unions officers *(a)* in the National Economic Development Office at its committees and *(b)* in other contexts.

**Mr. Portillo:** My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his predecessor attended two NEDC meetings in 1990 and two in 1991. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor also met officers of civil service unions twice in 1991.

### Plant and Machinery

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total value of investment in new plant and machinery in the United Kingdom in each of the last 15 years for which figures are available.

**Mr. Portillo:** Latest estimates of fixed investment in plant and machinery in the United Kingdom are as follows:

| | *Current Prices £ million* | *Constant (1985) Prices £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1977 | 9,707 | 17,124 |
| 1978 | 11,446 | 18,313 |
| 1979 | 13,539 | 19,736 |
| 1980 | 14,958 | 19,660 |
| 1981 | 15,067 | 18,269 |
| 1982 | 16,296 | 18,478 |
| 1983 | 17,935 | 19,401 |
| 1984 | 20,266 | 21,227 |
| 1985 | 23,870 | 23,870 |
| 1986 | 24,690 | 24,250 |
| 1987 | 27,073 | 25,943 |
| 1988 | 31,428 | 29,762 |
| 1989 | 36,258 | 33,485 |
| 1990 | 36,987 | 32,610 |
| 1991 | 34,064 | 29,364 |

1. *Source:* CSO database. Identifiers DFCX and DFCY.
2. The figures are consistent with those in the CSO Press Notice "Gross Domestic Product, first quarter 1992" released on 24 June 1992.

### Manufactured Goods

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what has been the total value at current sterling levels of exports of manufactured goods in each of the last 15 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of total exports these figures represented in each of those years;

(2) what has been the total value at current sterling levels of imports of manufactured goods in each of the last 15 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of total imports these figures represented in each of those years.

**Mr. Nelson:** The information is regularly published in table A9 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and table D5 of its annual supplement which are available in the Library of the House. The latest figures may be found on the Central Statistical Office database which can also be accessed through the Library.

### Commemorative Coins

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Government plan to issue any new commemorative coins.

**Mr. Lamont:** Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve my recommendation that a £2 coin be issued featuring a special design to commemorate the tercentenary of the Bank of England in 1994. It is not intended that the coin should go into general circulation, although standard versions will be available at most banks and post offices at face value, and special collectors' versions will be issued in precious metal and base metal.

### Financial Services Industry

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the self-regulatory systems of the financial services industry; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* Responsibility for the regulation of financial services passed to me on 7 June 1992. No changes are planned as a result of the transfer, but I shall of course keep the effectiveness of the regulatory system under review.

### Investors Compensation Scheme

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the current funding arrangements made by the self-regulatory bodies for the future of the investors compensation scheme.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The funding of the investors compensation scheme is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

## DEFENCE

### Personnel Numbers

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants currently work for the Ministry of Defence; and what is his estimate of the number of active service personnel there will be by the end of the current year.

**Mr. Aitken:** At 1 May 1992, the Ministry of Defence employed a total of 138,982 full-time equivalent civil servants, excluding casual staff and locally employed civilians overseas. The strength of the United Kingdom regular forces at the end of the next financial year is estimated to be 265,600.

### RAF Wyton

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what would be the cost of moving staff from the MOD establishment in Harrogate to RAF Wyton under the present proposals;

(2) what is the estimate of the overall cost of co-locating staff from the logistic: support services at RAF Wyton.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The estimated cost of relocating the MOD Harrogate function and the logistics support services to Wyton/Brampton is £49 million gross.

### RAF Brampton

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the size and description of the accommodation at present occupied by logistics command at RAF Brampton.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The new logistics command has not yet been formed and as such does not yet occupy any accommodation at RAF Brampton. HQRAF support command does, however, occupy some 10,000 sq m of modern purpose-built accommodation. The site also possesses 384 married quarters and single quarters for 152 officers, 68 warrant officers/senior non-commissioned officers, 239 corporals and other ranks.

### Tornado

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the two Tornado squadrons in the maritime attack role will in future be nuclear-capable.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Tornado squadrons in question will be dual-capable but will not retain a nuclear strike role against maritime targets.

### Logistics

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give a breakdown of the costings set out for the nine options in his consultative document on RAF logistics command location, the support management group and logistic support services.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** No. Provision of a detailed breakdown would disclose information which is, or could become, commercially sensitive.

### Married Quarters

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of married RAF service men employed at the MOD in Harrogate and the number living in married quarters.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** There are 276 married RAF service men employed at MOD Harrogate, of whom 65 live in married quarters.

### Peacekeeping

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training is given to NATO soldiers in optimum methods of peacekeeping.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** NATO has not so far been involved as a collective organisation in peacekeeping, although that may change in the future. The question of the requirement to train NATO soldiers in a peacekeeping role remains to be considered.

British forces have, of course, contributed to United Nations peacekeeping operations. For this latter role, the essential skills are those a soldier and unit are expected normally to achieve, supplemented as necessary by training related to the specific tasks which might be required by the particular UN operation.

### Courts Martial

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number and description of courts martial, convened for the trial of persons subject to military law in the Army in the United Kingdom in the year ended 28 February 1991.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** There were 442 district courts martial and 24 general courts martial.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number and description of courts martial convened outside the United Kingdom for the trial of persons, including civilians, subject to military law in the year ended 28 February 1991.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** District courts martial, 385; general courts martial, 21.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many offences the death penalty is available to an Army court martial in respect of accused persons, including civilians, *(a)* in the United Kingdom in time of peace and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom in peacetime or wartime.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Army Act 1955 provides for the death penalty in the United Kingdom and overseas for the following offences: assisting the enemy; serious misconduct in action; obstructing operations; mutiny; and failure to suppress mutiny.

This applies to any person, service man or civilian, subject to the Act. It is the policy, however, that such sentences should never be carried out in peacetime.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what directions are given to officers convening courts martial to inform the news media of the time and place at which a courts martial in the Army is to be held; and what is the practice followed.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** All Army headquarters convening courts martial are to compile weekly a list of forthcoming trials and this is to be posted at least 24 hours —48 hours in the case of the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR)—before the time of the first trial mentioned. The lists are posted at, or in the vicinity of, the headquarters in a place which is accessible to the public. Also the news media can contact the Ministry of Defence press desk to ascertain the time and place of a specific courts martial.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the maximum powers of minor punishment which can be inflicted by commanding officers or company commanders in the Army on officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and other ranks, without the defendant having any right to elect trial by court martial.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The maximum powers are:

*Commanding Officer*
Officers—Severe Reprimand
Warrant Officers—Severe Reprimand
Non-Commissioned Officers—Severe Reprimand
Other Ranks—Admonition, Restriction of Privileges

*Company Commanders*
Junior Non-Commissioned Officers—Reprimand
Other Ranks—Admonition, Restriction of Privileges

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the maximum powers of summary punishment which can be inflicted by commanding officers in the Army on officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, other ranks and civilians subject to military law subject to the right of the defendant to elect trial by court martial.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The information is as follows:

Officers—forfeiture of seniority.
Warrant officers—fine of up to 28 days pay.
Non-commissioned officers—fine of up to 28 days pay.
Other ranks—60 days detention.
Civilian—fine of up to £100.

### Military Custody

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of persons in the year ended 28 February 1991 who have died in military custody, and from what cause, *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities are available to persons in military custody *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom to get legal aid and advice.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** In the United Kingdom, when someone is interviewed by the service police, that person is entitled to advice from a civilian solicitor in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 and the relevant code of practice. If the matter is to be dealt with by court martial, the person may apply for legal aid by way of civilian professional assistance in accordance with a legal aid scheme that is administered by the Ministry of Defence. A person held in military custody but to be tried in a civil court can apply for civil legal aid through the civil courts.

Outside the United Kingdom it is normal practice for officers of the legal services to perform the role of a civilian solicitor when a person is interviewed by service police under PACE. The military legal aid scheme is available overseas in the same way as it is within the United Kingdom, although it is extended to cover alleged offences, tried by criminal courts, committed on or off duty. The legal aid scheme is available to all ranks and to members of the civilian component and dependants.

### Commanding Officers (Hearings)

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what access the public and news media are giving to hearings before commanding officers; and what means they have of knowing when such hearings are to take place.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Unlike in the case of courts martial, the public and news media have no access to hearings before commanding officers. The services do not inform the public or news media when such hearings are to take place.

### Empty Ministry Property

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all empty residential property in the London borough of Greenwich which is in the ownership or control of his Ministry and the type of accommodation available; how long each property has been vacant ; and what is the intended future use.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** As at 31 March 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 99 MOD-owned service married quarters, out of a total of 659, were vacant in the London borough of Greenwich. Ninety-eight had been vacant for under one year and one for between one and two years. All the properties are required for use by serving or redundant service personnel.

Many of the vacant properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation and some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly. In addition, nine married quarters were in the process of being sold and negotiations were taking place to lease 30 quarters to a housing association to accommodate redundant service personnel.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Members Office Costs

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the estimated cost of increasing the office costs allowance for hon. Members by 25 per cent.

**Mr. Newton:** The office costs allowance represents a maximum sum against which a Member may claim actual expenses incurred. The cost arising from an increase in the maximum of the OCA would depend, therefore, on the extent to which the allowable expenses of Members increased. The maximum additional cost of a 25 per cent. increase in the OCA would be around £4·7 million in a full year.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Horn of Africa

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what pledges Her Majesty's Government have made for food aid to the Horn of Africa; and what percentage of total pledges they represent in real terms.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have so far in 1992-93 pledged 57,000 tonnes of bilateral food aid for the Horn of Africa.

In addition, we have agreed to the use of 8,346 tonnes of our multilateral pledge to the World Food Programme for emergency operations in Eritrea. Taken together, these represent some 6·5 per cent. of total pledges, which, according to the WFP, amount to approximately 1 million tonnes for 1992.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will be increasing levels of food aid to the Horn of Africa in response to the recent statements from the UN World Food Programme.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** An additional 12,000 tonnes of food aid for the Horn of Africa was announced on 1 June in response to recent reports indicating the need for further pledges. A new special emergency programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA) appeal is expected shortly and we will be considering carefully our response to that as soon as it is issued.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what quantity of aid the Overseas Development Administration has provided for Ethiopia for the years 1989 to 1992; and what quantity of aid it plans to provide in the years 1993 to 1996, in cash and real terms.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Expenditure in 1989, 1990 and 1991 was respectively £12 million, £20 million and, provisionally, £22 million, mainly in the form of humanitarian assistance. In 1992, humanitarian aid provided under the bilateral programme has so far amounted to £11 million.

Future humanitarian needs, and our response, will be considered at the time. Under the long-term bilateral development programme, we expect to be involved in the rehabilitation process through non-governmental organisations and in such key sectors as education, including training.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will provide additional resources to ensure that pledges of food aid to the Horn of Africa are not delayed.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In addition to new pledges of food aid, we have already provided £4 million for infrastructure projects aimed at facilitating delivery of relief supplies. We shall be considering carefully what further response is required to the new special emergency programme for the Horn of Africa appeal, which is expected shortly.

## EDUCATION

### Student Unions (Grants)

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was paid out by higher and further education institutions via block grant to student unions in the past nine years *(a)* as a national total, *(b)* per pupil and *(c)* by institution.

**Mr. Forman:** Grant payments from universities in Great Britain to their student unions in the years in question were:

| *Academic years* | *£ million* | *[1] Per student (£)[1]* |
|---|---|---|
| 1982-83 | 15·1 | 45·91 |
| 1983-84 | 16·4 | 50·25 |
| 1984-85 | 15·9 | 48·68 |
| 1985-86 | 17·0 | 51·12 |
| 1986-87 | 17·2 | 50·48 |
| 1987-88 | 17·5 | 50·56 |
| 1988-89 | 17·1 | 47·22 |
| 1989-90 | 18·0 | 47·07 |
| 1990-91 | [2]19·7 | [2]48·70 |

[1] The per student figures are based on total full and part-time student numbers.
[2]Provisional.

The "Universities Statistical Record", which collects these figures, does not publish information on student union grants disaggregated by institution. Information is not available centrally for institutions in the polytechnics and colleges funding council sector or the further education sector.

### Schools, Colne Valley

**Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money each of the following schools in the Colne Valley constituency received in 1991-92 and will receive in 1992-93 from Kirklees local education authority; and how many pupils each school had at the beginning of those two years; Colne Valley high school, Holmfirth high school, Honley high school, Moorend high school and Salendine Nook high school.

**Mr. Forth:** The information is taken from Kirklees local education authority's budget statements for the years 1991-92 and 1992-93, published under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988:

| | *1991-92* | | *1992-93* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *High School* | *Number of pupils* | *Budget share £* | *Number of pupils* | *Budget share £* |
| Colne Valley | 1,399 | 2,302,459 | 1,446 | 2,543,317 |
| Holmfirth | 1,005 | 1,604,226 | 1,031 | 1,750,826 |
| Honley | 1,150 | 1,936,100 | 1,121 | 2,036,093 |
| Moorend | 800 | 1,388,723 | 808 | 1,476,858 |
| Salendine Nook | 1,105 | 1,768,887 | 1,132 | 1,923,585 |

### Illiteracy

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns *158-59*, whether the figure of 5·5 million functionally illiterate pupils includes those people who are literate in another language but functionally illiterate in English.

**Mr. Forman:** No. The adult literacy and basic skills unit estimates that an additional 500,000 adults in England and Wales whose first language is not English are "functionally illiterate" in English.

### Taiwanese Students

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students from Taiwan and currently studying in universities and colleges of further education in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Forman:** Figures for the latest available academic year 1990-91 show that there were 591 students from

Taiwan on courses of higher education, with a further 152 taking courses of further education in the United Kingdom.

### Discretionary Awards

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures are taken by his Department to monitor the nature, range and value of discretionary awards made by local education authorities.

**Mr. Forman:** My Department collects information annually from each local education authority in England and Wales on the number and aggregate value of discretionary awards made by it under sections 1(6) and 2 of the Education Act 1962 to students for attendance on courses of further and higher education.

### Refurbishment

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been spent on refurbishing his Department over the past three years.

**Mr. Forman:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *£ thousands* |
|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 277 |
| 1990-91 | 302 |
| 1991-92 | 697 |

The London headquarters of the Department moved to new premises in January 1992.

### Local Management of Schools

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement concerning the effects of local management of schools over the past two years.

**Mr. Forth:** The effects of local management of schools can be loosely attributed to the two main planks of LMS policy—formula funding and delegation.

The introduction of formula funding has meant that schools have been allocated funds according to a system that is open and equitable. Historical inequities have been revealed and are being addressed. The new openness has resulted in greater confidence and better-informed debate about relative funding needs. LMS has ensured that schools are funded mainly on the basis of their success in recruiting pupils—the more pupils they attract, the more money they get. In this way, LMS has given schools a strong incentive to be responsive to parents and rewards good schools.

Local management of schools requires the bulk of the local education authority school budget to be delegated to schools themselves, for governors to manage as they see fit. When schools receive a delegated budget, governing bodies also acquire the power to appoint and dismiss staff. LMS has therefore resulted in a marked shift of power from LEAs to schools. It has meant less money being retained and spent in county hall and more being spent in and by schools. It has meant greater flexibility for schools to manage their budget according to their own priorities.

We must remember that LMS is still in its infancy. Not all schools yet have full control of budgets allocated entirely by uncushioned formula. Transitional arrangements have however to be phased out by April 1994—1995 for inner London LEAs. Nevertheless, LMS has been widely welcomed by schools and there is general agreement that it has been a major positive development. That success has been due, in large part, to the dedication and hard work of governors and senior management in schools who have embraced their wider responsibilities with enthusiasm. Nor would LMS have been possible without the major contribution of LEA officers. I believe that the present popularity of LMS is well founded and I am confident that, as LMS policy matures, it will make an increasing contribution to improving standards in our schools.

### London University

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of students for the last available year at London university were from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the United States of America and *(c)* Japan; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** This information is not held centrally.

### Seven-year-olds (Testing)

**Mr. Fatchett;** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out the percentage of seven-year-olds in the 1991 standard assessment tasks who reached *(a)* level 3, *(b)* level 2, *(c)* level 1 in attainment target 2 of English—reading—and *(d)* the percentage of children who failed to reach level 1.

**Mr. Forth:** As indicated in "Testing 7 year olds in 1991: results of the National Curriculum assessments in England", copies of which are in the Library of the House, the percentages of seven-year-olds reaching the different levels in the reading component of English in the 1991 tests for seven-year-olds were as follows:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Level 3 | 21 |
| Level 2 | 50 |
| Level 1 | 26 |
| Working towards level 1 | 2 |
| Disapplied/not tested | 1 |

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Renewable Energy

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out in summary form the main information that his Department made available on renewable energy sources for consideration at the United Nations conference on the environment and development.

**Mr. Eggar:** The United Kingdom national report for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development included the White Paper "This Common Inheritance" and the first-year report. These documents, copies of which are in the Library of the House, set out the United Kingdom's position on renewable sources of energy. In addition, my Department provided advice to the United Kingdom delegation to the conference on the renewable energy aspects of Agenda 21, particularly in relation to the chapter on the atmosphere.

### Auditing Firms

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will investigate the lowballing practices of major auditing firms.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

### Nuffield Press

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, further to his correspondence with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby in respect of Nuffield Press Ltd., when he became aware of the errors in its accounts; what information he has sought from Coopers and Lybrand; and what steps have been taken by the auditors or the company to inform auditors of the errors in accounts.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** A typographical error in a note to the company's accounts was drawn to my Department's attention by the hon. Member in his letter of 23 March to my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood). As the hon. Member is aware from the subsequent letters from my predecessor and myself, the facts were checked with the company's auditors and the company is understood to be arranging to revise the accounts by a supplementary note.

### Sunshine Policies

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any proposals under which the Accounting Standards Board will be required to embrace sunshine policies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This is a matter for the Accounting Standards Board.

### Textile Industry

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he proposes to designate Lancashire as a region for assistance under the Retex initiative.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The European Commission has decided that grants under the Retex initiative, for regions heavily dependent on the textiles and clothing sector, should be available only within areas designated for objective 1, 2 or *5(b)* of the structural funds. The travel-to-work areas of Accrington and Rossendale, Blackburn, Bolton and Bury, Burnley, Liverpool, Pendle, Rochdale and Wigan and St. Helens—which lie wholly or partly within Lancashire—are so designated.

The Commission has asked the Government to decide by 4 December 1992 which parts of the designated areas should receive Retex grants. I shall take a decision in due course.

### BBC

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the promotion by the BBC of its publications on air; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is currently considering the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the publicising, in the course of providing a television broadcasting service, of goods supplied by the broadcaster, which he received on 19 June. The report will be published as soon as is practicable. The contents of all MMC reports remain confidential until publication. If the MMC finds no adverse effects, my right hon. Friend has no power to act. If the MMC has reached any adverse findings, he will decide what steps, if any, should be taken to remedy the situation.

### Coal

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give his most up-to-date estimate of the level of coal stockpiled on the ground at *(a)* pitheads and *(b)* power stations in the ownership of National Power, PowerGen or British Coal; what proposals he has, pursuant to the transitional coal-burn arrangement covering the period to April 1993, to encourage consumption of current coal stocks by the electricity generating companies; and what steps he will take to reduce coal stocks after April 1993.

**Mr. Eggar:** Information on coal stocks held at power stations and collieries in Great Britain is available in "Energy Trends", a statistical bulletin published monthly by my Department and available in the Library of the House. Coal consumption is a commercial matter for the companies concerned.

### Manufacturing Industries

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a statement detailing his policies for the future of the United Kingdom manufacturing industries;

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that manufacturing industries remain major, successful and competitive contributors to the economy.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The Government's policy is to provide the environment within which British industry can thrive. As the Confederation of British Industry noted in its report "Competing with the World's Best", recent years have seen a transformation in Britain's manufacturing base.

### Monopolies and Mergers Commission

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies are at present being undertaken by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and when it started these inquiries.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The MMC is presently undertaking these inquiries:

| *Type of reference and subject matter* | *Referral* | *Due (in date order)* |
|---|---|---|
| Merger Bond/British International Helicopters | 9 June 1992 | 9 September 1982 |
| Merger Bristow/British International Helicopters | 9 June 1992 | 9 September 1992 |
| Merger BM Group/Thwaites | 11 June 1992 | 11 September 1992 |

| Type of reference and subject matter | Referral | Due (in date order) |
|---|---|---|
| Monopoly Contact Lens Solutions | 30 April 1992 | 29 February 1993 |

### Cars

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will be responding to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into the price of new cars in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** On 6 May my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade announced that he had asked the Director General of Fair Trading to begin discussions with car suppliers with a view to implementing the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendations on the supply of new cars and for advice on whether any further action should be taken by the competition authorities in the light of a statement which Sir Leon Brittan made on the EC study of car prices.

### Commonwealth Development Corporation

**Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to publish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the Commonwealth Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The report is published today. The commission was asked to carry out an extensive inquiry into the efficiency and costs of, and the service provided by, the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

The commission is impressed by the dedication with which CDC staff work towards the corporation's objectives. It finds that the CDC is a competent organisation and that it provides a particularly valuable form of assistance to the economies of developing countries. It believes that the CDC's project-based approach, organisation and long-term commitment to its investments are well suited to its objectives. It reports that cash management is effective and that costs are not excessive and are well controlled.

The commission nevertheless concludes that the CDC could continue to make efficiency improvements. The commission recommends in particular that CDC should invest only in projects that, generally, meet specified rate of return thresholds and have an acceptable social and environmental impact; CDC should adopt a policy of charging market rates on its loans; CDC should improve its treatment of risk in projects appraisals; and CDC should set up a representative programme of evaluation and operational projects.

The commission notes some disadvantages in the current policy framework regarding restrictions on CDC's borrowing and liquidity, and the structure of its balance sheet. It believes that these issues should be examined further in the context of the forthcoming five-yearly review of CDC carried out by interested Government Departments and CDC.

The CDC will produce a preliminary response to the commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will make a statement.

### Manufacturing Investment

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has recently received about manufacturing investment in the north-west.

**Mr. Sainsbury** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* The Department receives considerable correspondence about the state of business in the north-west.

### Mr. David Vidler

**Mr. Redwood:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the reasons why he issued a special certificate under the national security provisions of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, in respect of Mr. David Vidler, of Rock lane, Hastings, East Sussex.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I have been asked to reply.

Like other Ministers, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has responsibility to the public to ensure that the interests of national security are not put at risk by the details of a particular case being subjected to open examination. He was satisfied that the case of Mr. Vidler fell within this criterion.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Environmental Impact Assessments

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to ensure that environmental impact assessments are applied to new agricultural plans and policies, including the whole of the common agricultural policy.

**Mr. Curry:** The Government do not believe that formal environmental impact assessment is appropriate or practicable for policies and plans. This would introduce onerous, over-elaborate and inflexible legal procedures which would seriously complicate and delay decision-making processes. The Government have, therefore, adopted a more effective and practicable approach.

Guidelines for Government Departments to ensure that the environmental implications policies and plans are properly addressed as part of the decision-making process were published by the Department of the Environment in 1991. A copy of this publication, "Policy Appraisal and the Environment" is available in the Library of the House. All Departments, including this one, follow these guidelines in respect of their policies and plans.

We are also determined to ensure that environmental protection is made an integral part of the common agricultural policy. In response to my right hon. Friend the Minister's insistence on this point, the Agriculture Council at its meeting in May made a specific declaration calling on the Commission to make early proposals to this effect. We will be seeking to ensure that progress is made during the United Kingdom presidency.

### Countryside Premium Scheme

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to introduce a nationwide countryside premium scheme top-up.

**Mr. Curry:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on 22 June, *Official Report*, column 77.

### Habitat Protection

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a long-term habitat creation and management scheme along the lines of the US conservation reserve programme.

**Mr. Curry:** We plan to introduce an environmental set-aside scheme under the agri-environment measures agreed as part of the common agricultural policy reform measures. This will not necessarily resemble the US conservation reserve programme which focuses primarily on preventing soil erosion and improving water quality.

### Fallen Animals

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide figures for the number of fallen cattle, sheep and pigs removed by licensed knackers yard operators in 1988, 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Soames:** Precise figures are not available but it is estimated that currently licensed knackers yards probably handle in excess of half a million fallen sheep, cattle and pigs annually.

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of current regulations to ensure that fallen sheep, cattle and pigs are handled only by licensed knackers yard operators.

**Mr. Soames:** There are a number of methods available to farmers for the disposal of fallen stock, including removal to a licensed knackers yard. Proper burial and incineration are also acceptable disposal methods, as is removal to hunt kennels.

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he proposes to take to prevent the illicit dumping of the carcases of fallen animals.

**Mr. Soames:** The State Veterinary Service acts in close concert with local authorities so that action can be taken against illegal dumping of carcases. Illegal dumping is an offence under the Dogs Act 1906 but the intention is to increase penalties for such activities when legislation to implement Community rules in relation to the disposal of animal waste is introduced.

### Meat Exports

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will show the tonnage of *(a)* lamb, *(b)* mutton, *(c)* pork, *(d)* veal and *(e)* beef exported from the United Kingdom in each year since 1985;

(2) if he will show the tonnage of *(a)* lamb, *(b)* mutton, *(c)* pork, *(d)* veal and *(e)* beef imported into the United Kingdom from EC and non-EC countries in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Soames:** The tables show exports and imports of the various meats exported from, and imported into, the United Kingdom in each year since 1985. To assist comparability, boneless meat has been converted to bone-in weights, except in the case of bacon and ham which has also been included in the tables. The figures do not include trade in meat offals or in preserved or manufactured meat products—for example, canned meat.

*Exports of carcase meat*
*1985 to 1991*

*Thousand tonnes*

| | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lamb and mutton | 48·8 | 60·1 | 71·2 | 76·0 | 89·3 | 79·8 | 83·1 |
| Pork | 43·4 | 50·5 | 43·6 | 52·7 | 52·5 | 50·0 | 75·1 |
| Bacon and ham | 5·7 | 5·8 | 4·9 | 5·1 | 5·5 | 5·0 | 4·9 |
| Veal | 0·6 | 1·9 | 2·7 | 1·3 | 1·4 | 0·4 | 1·1 |
| Beef | 184·1 | 184·1 | 188·8 | 131·7 | 150·9 | 121·9 | 133·0 |
| TOTAL | 282·6 | 302·4 | 311·2 | 266·8 | 299·6 | 257·1 | 297·3 |

*Imports of carcase meat*
*1985 to 1991*

*Thousand tonnes*

| | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *From the EC* | | | | | | | |
| Lamb and mutton | 0·8 | 0·3 | 0·4 | 1·5 | 1·8 | 2·0 | 2·1 |
| Pork | 28·5 | 29·3 | 44·3 | 56·4 | 89·9 | 79·8 | 74·6 |
| Bacon and ham | 262·0 | 256·1 | 258·8 | 255·0 | 258·4 | 258·7 | 253·3 |
| Veal | 3·4 | 4·7 | 3·7 | 2·2 | 1·4 | 1·1 | 7·3 |
| Beef | 121·7 | 173·8 | 187·9 | 211·4 | 170·7 | 138·6 | 143·5 |
| TOTAL | 416·4 | 464·2 | 495·1 | 526·5 | 522·2 | 480·2 | 480·8 |
| *From non-EC* | | | | | | | |
| Lamb and mutton | 172·5 | 142·1 | 153·8 | 134·9 | 135·3 | 151·8 | 121·6 |
| Pork | 7·3 | 4·5 | 4·8 | 4·2 | 4·0 | 1·2 | 0·6 |
| Bacon and ham | 2·4 | 2·2 | 1·4 | 1·3 | 1·6 | 1·1 | 0·6 |
| Veal | 0·0 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 0·0 | 0·0 |
| Beef | 53·5 | 49·5 | 49·7 | 53·2 | 46·6 | 36·5 | 38·8 |
| TOTAL | 235·7 | 198·3 | 209·7 | 193·6 | 187·5 | 190·6 | 161·6 |

### Animal Exports

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live animals were exported from the United Kingdom for *(a)* breeding, *(b)* further fattening *(c)* immediate slaughter and *(d)* other purposes in each year since 1985.

**Mr. Soames:** The overseas trade statistics classify trade in live animals according to whether it is pure-bred breeding animals or other animals but they do not provide the exact classifications of trade, by intended purpose, which the hon. Member is seeking. The hon. Member is referred to the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom", copies of which are in the House of Commons Library.

### Orange Juice

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will name the food companies being prosecuted by his Department in connection with the sale of adulterated orange juice.

**Mr. Soames:** Information variously alleging offences under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and the Food Safety Act 1990 were laid on 6 February this year against the following defendants:

Asda Stores Ltd.
Cima Foods Ltd.
Express Dairy Ltd.
Gerber Foods Manufacturing Ltd.
Gerber Foods International Ltd.
Healds Juices Ltd.
Princes Ltd.
Safeway plc
Sainsbury plc
Superdrug Stores Ltd.
Tesco Stores Ltd.

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions govern the amount of sugar which may be added to a litre of orange juice labelled as unsweetened.

**Mr. Soames:** The composition and labelling of orange juice are regulated by the Fruit Juices and Fruit Nectars Regulations 1977 which implement European Community rules. The regulations permit the addition of sugars to orange juice up to a level of 100 g per litre, but if added at levels above 15 g per litre the word "sweetened" must appear on the label, with a declaration of the quantity of sugars added. There is no specific definition for the description "unsweetened". It is, of course, subject to the general provisions of the Food Safety Act 1990—sections 14 and 15—and as such must not mislead the purchaser to a material degree as to the nature, substance or quality of the food.

### Cetaceans

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development took on the report of the International Whaling Commission's sub-committee on small cetaceans; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** None.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claims for disability living allowance remained to be decided as of 1 June;

(2) what is the average delay between the approval of a claim for a disability living allowance and the claimant being paid;

(3) in what proportion of decisions on disability living allowance have appeals against the decision been made; and in how many of these cases the appeal has been determined in favour of the claimant;

(4) how many claims for disability living allowance had been decided by 1 June.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time from submission of a claim for disability living allowance to its resolution.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Attendance Allowance

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how long claims on the new-style self-assessment form for attendance allowance are taking to process and payments to commence; how long the old-style claims, where a doctor visits to make an assessment, are taking to clear and payments to commence; what are his Department's target times to deal with each kind of claim; and how many claim applications have been waiting for longer than the target times;

(2) of the cases adjudicated under the new procedure in relation to self-assessment for attendance allowance, how many have been decided; how many were successful; how many were turned down; and how many were awarded *(a)* the higher rate and *(b)* the lower rate;

(3) what measures are being taken to keep claimants informed of the progress of their claim for attendance allowance and of the time they should expect to wait.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Disability Benefits

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current average waiting time for dealing with claims for *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance and *(c)* disability living allowance and, in the case of *(a)* and *(b)*, how those waiting times have varied over each of the last three years.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Youth Poverty

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what figures he has for the level of poverty among 16 and 17-year-olds in Scotland; and what action he intends to take.

**Mr. Burt:** We do not publish statistics on living standards disaggregated on a regional basis. However, the Social Services Select Committee has published an analysis carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies—"Households and Families Below Average Income: A Regional Analysis", copies of which are available in the Library.

### Social Fund

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total of social fund payment made, by way of grants and loans, at the local offices of Greenock and Port Glasgow in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; and what is the social fund allocation for these two offices in 1992-93 in terms of (i) grants and (ii) loans.

**Mr. Scott:** The information requested is in the Library.

## TRANSPORT

### EC Funds

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the European Community funds received by the United Kingdom for transport infrastructure projects in each of the last five years broken down for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and by mode of transport.

**Mr. Norris:** For the years for which information is available, United Kingdom transport projects received European Community funding as set out in the tables.

| | *1987-88* £ | *1988-89* £ | *1989-90* £ | *1990-91* £ | *Total* £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *England* | | | | | |
| Roads | 859,260 | 1,532,439 | 5,901,519 | 72,810 | 8,366,028 |
| Local public transport | 351 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 356 |
| Railways | 2,286 | 2,815,097 | 460,245 | 2,306 | 3,279,934 |
| Airports | 3,934 | 3,151 | 7,685 | 3,111 | 17,881 |
| Ports | 9,473 | 5,860 | 2,425 | 427 | 18,185 |
| Total | 875,364 | 4,356,552 | 6,371,874 | 78,654 | 11,682,384 |
| *Scotland* | | | | | |
| Roads | 27,602 | 9,427 | 25,453 | 29,016 | 91,498 |
| Local public transport | 2,085 | 377 | 65 | 2,834 | 5,361 |
| Railways | 9,017 | 142 | 3,299 | 6,422 | 18,880 |
| Airports | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ports | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 38,704 | 9,946 | 28,817 | 38,272 | 115,739 |
| *Wales* | | | | | |
| Roads | 604,913 | 16,078 | 8,000 | 2,821,163 | 3,450,154 |
| Local public transport | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Railways | 207 | 1,450 | 1,900 | 747 | 4,304 |
| Airports | 0 | 32 | 0 | 23 | 55 |
| Ports | 2,002 | 2 | 635 | 11 | 2,650 |
| Total | 607,122 | 17,562 | 10,535 | 2,821,944 | 3,457,163 |
| *Northern Ireland* | | | | | |
| Roads | 2,917 | 1,554 | 1,476 | 591 | 6,538 |
| Local public transport | 220 | 600 | 900 | 0 | 1,720 |
| Railways | 0 | 564 | 712 | 256 | 1,532 |
| Airports | 949 | 1,773 | 200 | 0 | 2,922 |
| Ports | 6,320 | 3,954 | 1,722 | 1,430 | 13,426 |
| Total | 10,406 | 8,445 | 5,010 | 2,277 | 26,138 |

### A13

**Mrs. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer on 13 May to the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), *Official Report*, column *107*, if he will give a breakdown of the figure of £7 million for the Cotton street-Blackwall tunnel junction (A102).

**Mr. Norris:** Detailed design work is continuing but has already shown the need for additional work, including statutory undertakers' diversions. The latest estimated total works cost of £7 million comprises £4 million for road works, £2 million for statutory undertakers' works and £1 million for value added tax.

### A21

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to improve the A21 between Flimwell and Hurst Green.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The Department appointed East Sussex county council last year to undertake a route assessment and scheme identification study for the A21 trunk road in East Sussex, including the section between Flimwell and Hurst Green. On receipt of the county council's final report, we shall consider whether to include further schemes in the national road programme.

### South Circular Road

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the further recommendations of his Department's consultants, Travers Morgan, arising from the south circular assessment study will be made public.

**Mr. Norris:** A decision was taken in March 1990 not to proceed with the major road building schemes recommended by the London assessment studies. The consultants were asked to examine more limited improvements to reduce accidents and to deal with local bottlenecks. Their findings have since been considered and developed further by the Department and no useful purpose would now be served by publishing them. Local authorities and others will be consulted when the Department is ready to bring forward proposals.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Norris:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible for all international treaties and I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

### Benzene

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he will take to reduce the exposure of individuals to benzene resulting from petrol evaporation; and what discussions he has had with petrol companies and vehicle manufacturers concerning minimising exposure to benzene.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** A number of steps have been taken, and are planned, to reduce evaporate emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which include benzene, from the storage, distribution and use of petrol.

The Government are in the process of adopting from the end of this year an EC directive setting stringent standards for the reduction of carbon monoxide, the combined total of hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen and evaporative emissions. Those measures will, in practice, require new cars to be fitted with catalytic converters in their exhaust systems that will reduce VOCs in car exhaust by about 75 per cent.

The Government also have plans to adopt a new European standard for unleaded petrol next year. It will include lower "volatility" criteria, which will reduce evaporative emissions. The same volatility criteria will also be applied to leaded petrol.

The Government are co-operating with the European Commission in the drafting of directives which will reduce evaporative emissions from the storage and distribution of petrol and during car refuelling.

The Government are in dialogue with both oil and motor industries on these matters.

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last updated his traffic forecasts for the channel tunnel; and what was the source for the provision of the information.

**Mr. Freeman:** The channel tunnel is a private sector venture. Traffic forecasts are a matter for Eurotunnel and the railway companies running trains through the tunnel.

My Department has, however, recently commissioned a study to update the information on the effects of the channel tunnel on the main trunk road links in Kent and the consultant's report is expected to be received in the very near future.

### No-claim Bonuses

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to the effect that innocent victims of vehicles damaged by hit-and-run drivers should not forfeit insurance no-claim bonuses; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The terms and conditions of a no-claim discount scheme form part of the contract between the motorist and insurer. Such schemes have no statutory basis and it would not be right to seek to regulate their operation by legislation.

### Jubilee Line

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes have been made in the pattern of payment of the £400 million sought from the private sector for the Jubilee line extension.

**Mr. Norris:** No changes have been made. My right hon. Friend has repeatedly made it clear that we expect a contribution of the same value as that originally promised, including £100 million in the construction period.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will change his policy of seeking a £400 million contribution from the private sector for construction of the Jubilee line extension.

**Mr. Norris:** No.

### Transport Council

**Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of discussions held at the Transport Council on 22 and 23 June.

**Mr. MacGregor:** The Transport Council held in Luxembourg on 22 and 23 June took three decisions of major and lasting importance for European transport.

It agreed to liberalise the licensing of aviation operators, their access to markets in the European Community and the fares they charge from 1 January 1993. The liberalisation and competition that that will stimulate will be of fundamental and enduring importance to all those who use and work in aviation in Europe.

Restrictions on fares have been removed and airlines are free to introduce new lower fares without going through complex approval processes. The mechanisms by which other Governments can keep fares artificially high have been removed.

British airlines will be able to fly any international route in the Community without restriction. Airlines will be able to fly not only London-Paris but also London-Paris-Rome and, most importantly, Paris-Rome without any link with London. This removal of restrictions applies to the charter travel market as well as to scheduled services.

The Council also agreed to liberalise maritime cabotage. The anachronism of the United Kingdom and some other member states having their coastal trades open while the rest did not will be ended. Here, too, the opening-up of markets is going to be of great importance and value to all users of shipping and to ship owners.

The Council also agreed on cabotage for road passenger transport. This is of major importance to passengers and operators, most immediately for those using coach tours to other states. The details of the new agreements are as follows.

*Aviation Liberalisation*

The unanimous agreement of the Council on the third and final stage of aviation liberalisation for the completion of the single market was on three regulations covering licensing, market access, and fares and rates. Under the licensing regulation, any airline that meets uniform financial and safety requirements will from 1 January 1993 be entitled to an operating licence in any member state; member states will no longer be able to licence only "flag carriers". Under the market access regulation, Community airlines will operate on an equal basis throughout the EC, with access to all international routes within the Community from 1 January 1993. Community airlines will also be able to fly internal routes within member states —cabotage—from the same date where their flights are linked to an international flight, and from 1 April 1997 where they are free standing. The fares and rates regulation removes Government restrictions on pricing. New fares can be brought in immediately and existing restrictions on scheduled fares and charter rates will be swept away. There will be safeguards to protect the consumer against excessively high or predatory fares, but only exceptional circumstances. Regulation of fares is over.

*Road Passenger Liberalisation*

The Council's decision on liberalisation of road passenger cabotage provides for liberalisation of closed door tours—that is, where the same vehicle is used to carry the same group of passengers throughout a journey—from 1 January 1993 and the liberalisation of other non-regular services from 1 January 1996. There will also be a Council decision on regular service cabotage as soon as possible after a Commission proposal, to be submitted by the end of 1995.

*Maritime Liberalisation*

Under the agreement on the liberalisation of maritime cabotage, Community ship owners will from 1 January 1993 have the general right to carry goods between mainland ports in the Community and also from any EC mainland port to off-shore installations. Liberalisation of some of these mainland port services will be phased in in the Mediterranean and along the coasts of Spain, Portugal and France—for example, cruises from 1 January 1995, transport of strategic goods from 1 January 1997; services by ships smaller than 650 gross tonnes from 1 January 1998 and regular passenger and ferry services from 1 January 1999. Mainland-to-island and island-to-island services will be liberalised in the Mediterranean from 1 January 1999, subject to a special exemption for certain Greek trades from 1 January 2004. In general, there will not be crew nationality restrictions for mainland cabotage over and above those imposed by the state of registry, but for a transitional period in respect of most types of island cabotage, host member states may impose their own crew nationality requirements.

The Council also discussed but did not reach agreement on: the liberalisation of road haulage cabotage; fiscal harmonisation in the road sector; and a mandate for negotiations with third countries on inland waterways.

*Forthcoming United Kingdom Presidency*

There are important tasks remaining for the United Kingdom presidency in the transport sector. Full liberalisation of road haulage cabotage has yet to be agreed; and there will need to be Community agreement on airport slot allocation to complement the third aviation package. I also hope that during the United Kingdom presidency the Community will take forward the increasingly rigorous application of the state aid rules in the transport sector so as to provide for full and proper competition in the single market.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Regional Offices

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide a table of expenditure showing the cost of running each regional office of her Department and the cost of running sub-regional offices aggregated by region and with Greater London shown separately and excluding the funding programmes operated by the offices for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The table of expenditure shows the cost of running each regional office of the Department for Employment's training, enterprise and education directorate (TEED) for each year from 1987-88 to 1991-92. The figures are shown *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

The figures exclude the funding for programmes operated by the offices. It is not possible to identify separately the costs of running sub-regional offices. Any sub-regional office costs are subsumed within the totals for each regional office.

The Employment Department group as a whole has other regionally based organisations, but is unable to supply information for those, except at disproportionate cost.

*Employment Department TEED*
*Regional running costs 1987-88 to 1991-92*

| Region | 1987-88 | | 1988-89 | | 1989-90 | | 1990-91 | | 1991-92 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | At 1987-88 prices £000s | At 1992-93 prices £000s | At 1987-88 prices £000s | At 1992-93 prices £000s | At 1987-88 prices £000s | At 1992-93 prices £000s | At 1987-88 prices £000s | At 1992-93 prices £000s | At 1987-88 prices £000s | At 1992-93 prices £000s |
| South East | 11,531·8 | 15,943·1 | 11,352·1 | 15,777·2 | 10,836·2 | 15,125·6 | 7,147·8 | 10,044·7 | 2,462·9 | 3,478·2 |
| London | 13,553·3 | 18,738·1 | 13,051·1 | 18,138·5 | 12,228·7 | 17,069·3 | 13,828·7 | 19,433·2 | 3,812·9 | 5,384·7 |
| South West | 7,576·9 | 10,475·4 | 6,778·6 | 9,421·0 | 6,692·2 | 9,341·3 | 4,761·5 | 6,691·2 | 1,542·7 | 2,178·6 |
| West Midlands | 10,944·9 | 15,131·7 | 10,058·4 | 13,979·2 | 9,661·4 | 13,485·9 | 8,867·6 | 12,461·5 | 2,407·7 | 3,400·2 |
| East Midlands | 8,995·0 | 12,435·9 | 8,465·3 | 11,765·1 | 8,576·6 | 11,971·7 | 8,415·4 | 11,825·9 | 2,422·1 | 3,420·8 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 8,855·3 | 12,242·7 | 7,937·9 | 11,032·2 | 8,377·8 | 11,694·2 | 7,176·9 | 10,085·5 | 1,911·2 | 2,699·9 |
| Northern | 7,443·9 | 10,291·5 | 6,908·8 | 9,601·9 | 6,871·0 | 9,590·9 | 3,494·9 | 4,911·4 | 1,818·9 | 2,568·7 |
| North West | 13,823·1 | 19,110·9 | 12,902·0 | 17,931·4 | 12,555·6 | 17,525·8 | 10,048·2 | 14,120·6 | 2,898·0 | 4,092·5 |
| Wales | 6,302·8 | 8,713·8 | 6,252·6 | 8,689·9 | 6,251·5 | 8,726·3 | 5,215·2 | 7,328·9 | 1,832·6 | 2,587·9 |
| Scotland | 11,812·0 | 16,330·5 | 11,244·6 | 15,627·9 | 10,696·7 | 14,930·9 | 11,978·3 | 16,832·7 | — | — |
| Total | 100,839·0 | 139,413·6 | 94,951·4 | 131,964·3 | 92,747·7 | 129,461·9 | 80,934·5 | 113,735·6 | 21,109·0 | 29,811·5 |

*Note:*
It is not possible to make a direct comparison of the figures from 1990-91 onwards. From 1990-91, training and enterprise councils have replaced the Department's sub-regional offices—area offices—on a phased time scale which ended in 1991-92.

## Employment Prospects

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information she has on the employment prospects for people who are unemployed and do not enter employment training.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Department does not produce forecasts of the employment prospects of people who are unemployed. Information based on claimant data for April 1991—April 1992 shows that 41 per cent. of individuals unemployed for six months will leave the register before they have been unemployed for 12 months. It is not possible to determine how many of these individuals will leave to go into ET, leave the labour market or find employment.

## Training and Enterprise Councils

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what means are used to monitor TECs' performance against the business plan in meeting their contractual obligation for people with disabilities and learning difficulties; what is done with the monitoring reports undertaken by her Department; and what publicity she gives to the outcomes of these monitoring visits.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Training and enterprise councils' business plans are examined before approval to ensure that they have included objectives and targets for helping people with disabilities. TECs are required by their contract to provide regular performance statistics relating to the training and placing of people with disabilities. The Department's regional contract managers review TEC's achievements against objectives at regular intervals.

Performance reports produced as part of this monitoring process are used to ensure that appropriate action is being taken and that TECs are delivering the agreed plan within the terms of their contract.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what means of support TECs provide for young people leaving special schools who wish to enter youth training and gain vocational qualifications; and what steps are taken to ensure that funding is available to meet the higher cost of training people with disabilities.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Support for young people with disabilities is provided as an integral part of the Department's training and enterprise programmes.

All young people under 18 wishing to enter youth training and who are not in full-time education or employment are guaranteed a YT place. All young people with disabilities remain eligible for a place on YT beyond 18 under the extended guarantee, if their availability for YT has been delayed by the effects of their disability or health problems.

TECs contract that every eligible person who is resident in a TEC's operational area and who is a member of the YT guarantee group or the YT extended guarantee group shall be assessed and offered a training opportunity with at least one approved qualification at or above level 2 national vocational qualification. For those young people with special needs for whom this would not be a realistic target, and provided that the individual is endorsed by the Careers Service as category A or B special training needs and continues to be a member of the YT guarantee or extended guarantee groups, the TEC has to ensure that training is individually designed to give them the support and help they need to make progress towards attainable general and vocational competences.

TECs' training budgets are negotiated annually with the regional directors of the Employment Department. These negotiations take into account the anticipated additional costs of providing youth training for trainees who have special training needs.

All young people including those leaving special schools come within these arrangements.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make the system of payment for TECs for training those with disabilities or learning difficulties independent of the length of time to achieve qualifications.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The system of payment for TECs already allows the duration of training to be tailored to the needs of the individual, including those with disabilities or learning difficulties.

### Training Credits

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action has been taken on the report of the Training Standards Advisory Service on the lessons learnt from the first round of training credit pilots; and if she will publish the report.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** On 17 June 1992, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment published a progress report on the first 12 months' operation of the pilots. The report summarised the findings from the main evaluation studies, including the inspections by the Training Standards Advisory Service (TSAS). Following normal practice, we do not intend to publish the TSAS report separately.

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evaluation has been undertaken on the first round of training credits to determine whether the special needs of people with disabilities and learning difficulties are being met.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** As part of the evaluation, case studies were carried out last year in each of the pilot areas. The studies focused on the impact of credits on various groups including young people with special needs. An overview of the studies has been prepared for the Department by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte. This report is freely available and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. Further studies in this area are planned.

## SCOTLAND

### Steel Sites

19. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Motherwell district council regarding the restoration of steel sites in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The work on this is being done on the Government's behalf principally by Scottish Enterprise and the Lanarkshire development agency, involving the local authorities and others as appropriate. As the hon. Member is aware, I will be meeting him along with the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and representatives of Motherwell district council later today to discuss this issue.

### Youth Unemployment

21. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 16 and 17-year-olds in the Dundee travel-to-work area are currently unemployed or on youth training programmes.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** In the Dundee travel-to-work area in April 1992 the number of unemployed claimants aged under 17 was 26; and the number aged 17 was 51. Information about how many 16 and 17-year-olds in the Dundee travel-to-work area are on youth training programmes is not available in the form requested. However, the number of young people aged 18 and under on youth training in the Dundee City district council area was 1,262 as at 14 May 1992, the latest date for which figures are available.

### Kingston Bridge, Glasgow

22. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to assist Strathclyde regional council to keep Kingston bridge, Glasgow, open to traffic; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Plans for the future of Kingston bridge are matters for Strathclyde regional council in the first instance. We will, however, give careful consideration to any requirements included in the council's financial plans in respect of Kingston bridge when determining capital allocations for 1993-94 and subsequent years.

### Offensive Weapons

23. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to change the law on the carrying of offensive weapons.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are already heavy penalties available in law for carrying and using offensive weapons. We are committed to changing the law to make it even more difficult to carry knives and will be bringing forward proposals in due course.

### Drug-related Crime

24. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources he is allocating to Strathclyde regional council police department to combat drug-related crimes; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Strathclyde regional council determines the resources allocated to Strathclyde police and it is for the chief constable to decide how the resources available to him should be deployed. The council receives police grant at 51 per cent. of its net expenditure on the police.

### A75

25. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any further improvements are planned for the A75 Stranraer/Carlisle road.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** In recognition of its important role in serving ferry traffic to Ireland, the A75 Gretna to Stranraer route has now been substantially improved and all the major bypass schemes are complete. Current plans are aimed particularly at targeting residual overtaking and safety problems. The next major project, the Glen improvement just west of Dumfries, is currently at an advanced stage of preparation. In addition, a number of schemes are in preparation aimed specifically at road safety. As elsewhere in Scotland, there are projects on the A75 whose feasibility has not yet been established or developed which will be brought forward in the longer term.

### Diabetics

26. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to take steps to alter the treatment available to diabetics through the national health service.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** Other than evaluating the possibility that pen injection systems might become

available on GP prescription, there are no present plans to alter the treatment available to diabetics through the NHS in Scotland.

### Governance

27. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's commitment to take stock of the Scottish constitutional question.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government are continuing to review ways of making the government of Scotland fully responsive to Scotland's needs within the framework of an integrated United Kingdom.

32. **Mrs. Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss constitutional change in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Ministers meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress from time to time for discussions on a broad range of matters, but have no plans for a meeting specifically to discuss constitutional change in Scotland.

### Alcohol-related Crime

28. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what actions he is taking to reduce the incidence of alcohol-related crime in Scotland.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** To tackle alcohol-related crime we have tightened the licensing laws; provided tougher penalties for drink-driving offences; and introduced experimental bye-laws to prohibit drinking in public places. The Scottish Council on Alcohol, which receives substantial Government funding, has produced an education package "Ending Offending" which is widely used in penal establishments with offenders aged 16 to 30. There are many other local initiatives aimed at tackling alcohol and crime.

### Committee of the Regions

29. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about Scottish representation on the committee of the regions proposed in the draft treaty signed at Maastricht; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** My right hon. Friend has received four representations about Scottish involvement in the proposed committee of the regions. The Government have not yet reached conclusions on how the United Kingdom's seats should be filled.

### Local Government Review

30. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Her Majesty's Government expect to announce proposals arising from the current review of Scottish local government.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** We plan to issue in the autumn a second consultation paper setting out illustrative options for the new structure.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress he has made with his plans to reform local government in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** We are making good progress with our plans to reform local government. My right hon. Friend announced in May that he had commissioned consultants to examine the transitional and long-term costs of restructuring. This work will inform a second consultation paper setting out illustrative options for the new structure which we will issue in the autumn.

### Scottish History

31. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to further knowledge and understanding of Scottish history throughout the United Kingdom.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Scottish history is well represented in the curriculum and examination syllabuses followed in Scottish schools. Bodies such as Historic Scotland, the national museums and galleries of Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish tourist board are active in developing wider awareness of Scotland's historical heritage.

### Lockerbie

33. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date the Scottish Office was first informed of the find of a case of drugs from Pan Am 103 at Lockerbie by Mr. Jim Wilson, farmer of Tundergarth Nains farm.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Scottish Office has never been informed of any case of drugs from Pan Am flight 103 being found.

### Strathclyde Police

34. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many chief superintendents have served in D division of Strathclyde police from June 1989 to June 1992.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I understand that four chief superintendents served in D division during the period in question. Two left the division on appointment as assistant chief constable, and one of the others was relief divisional commander during the serving officer's attendance at the Police Training College, Bramshill.

### EC Council Meeting, Edinburgh

35. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra costs will be incurred by his Department and by Lothian regional council as a consequence of the European Community Council in Edinburgh; and if Lothian region will be fully paid for extra police costs.

**Mr. Ian Lang:** The main costs of holding the European Council meeting in Edinburgh, including works at the Palace of Holyroodhouse and the provision of press facilities at Meadowbank, will be met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In addition, the Scottish Office will provide police specific grant to meet 51 per cent. of the expenditure incurred by Lothian and Borders police board in policing the meeting; I understand policing costs are estimated at around £2·5 million.

## Insects

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what studies the Forestry Commission has undertaken of the insect life supported by different species of trees.

**Sir Hector Monro:** The Forestry Commission has an active research programme into the ecology and conservation of forest insects. This includes a number of studies of the insect life supported by different species of tree. Several other institutes in Britain also conduct research on tree insects.

## Deaf-Blind People

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of deaf-blind people in each regional and island authority.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Provisional figures as at 31 March 1991 for people who are registered blind or partially sighted and who are also deaf are set out in the tables.

*Registered blind and partially sighted people who are also deaf*
*Figures as at 31 March 1991 (provisional)*

TABLE 1
*Those aged under 65*

| Region | Blind | | | Partially sighted | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Borders | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Central | 8 | 6 | 14 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fife | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Grampian | 3 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Highland | 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Lothian | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Strathclyde | 13 | 11 | 24 | 3 | 7 | 10 |
| Tayside | 1 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Orkney | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Shetland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Western Isles | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SCOTLAND | 32 | 33 | 65 | 17 | 15 | 32 |

TABLE 2
*Those aged 65 and over*

| Region | Blind | | | Partially sighted | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Borders | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Central | 19 | 31 | 50 | 9 | 5 | 14 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fife | 7 | 11 | 18 | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| Grampian | 40 | 57 | 97 | 13 | 31 | 44 |
| Highland | 17 | 22 | 39 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Lothian | 4 | 21 | 25 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Strathclyde | 79 | 152 | 231 | 16 | 41 | 57 |
| Tayside | 19 | 33 | 52 | 6 | 15 | 21 |
| Orkney | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Shetland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Western Isles | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| SCOTLAND | 188 | 334 | 522 | 56 | 115 | 171 |

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities are available for deaf-blind people; if he will make additional funds available to develop services for them; and if he will make a statement.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Government policy is that deaf-blind people should be encouraged to reach their full potential in the community, and where care is required it should be provided in their own homes wherever possible.

The provision of facilities for deaf-blind people at local level is a matter for the local authorities and, in relation to health care, for the health boards. Decisions on the nature and extent of assistance to be provided are for the authorities themselves, having regard to the resources available to them. Since coming to office in 1979 the Government have increased expenditure provision for social work in real terms by 88 per cent.

The Scottish Office has provided SENSE in Scotland, the voluntary body which works on behalf of deaf-blind children and young people, with grants under sections 9 and 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 totalling £60,000 in the current year. A capital grant of £36,000 was given to SENSE and Quarriers Homes in 1988 to help with building costs at the Overbridge centre, a national residential centre for deaf-blind people in Pollockshields.

In addition, revenue grants totalling £22,000 and a capital grant of £10,000 have since been made to Visualise, an organisation which offers training in social skills to blind post-school young people who are multipally handicapped, at a residential centre in Edinburgh.

### Wick Airport

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reasons were supplied to his Department for the improvement scheme for Wick airport announced in May by Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The responsibility for determining priorities for expenditure on airport improvements, including those at Wick, lies with Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. I understand, however, that the works are required in order to update and improve facilities at the airport in the interests of providing a better service to users.

### Teachers (Stress)

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans the Government have to improve the availability of and access to counselling and support services for members of the teaching profession.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Education authorities have the principal responsibility for assessing the need and making appropriate provision for services relating to the employment of teaching staff. As part of our guidance on implementation of the staff development and appraisal initiative, we recommended that teachers seeking to improve their professional performance should be able to obtain the advice and support needed from their employing authorities.

### Diseases, Ayrshire and Arran

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of cases of lymphoma, myeloma and aplastic-anaemia per annum over the last 10 years in the Ayrshire and Arran health board area.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The information is as follows:

| *Year of registration or discharge* | *Lymphoma* | *Multiple Myeloma* | *Single Myeloma/ Plasmacytoma* | *Aplastic-Anaemia* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 38 | 25 | 0 | 7 |
| 1982 | 45 | 23 | 0 | 18 |
| 1983 | 41 | 21 | 0 | 7 |
| 1984 | 55 | 13 | 0 | 13 |
| 1985 | 53 | 17 | 0 | 16 |
| 1986 | 35 | 16 | 0 | 6 |
| 1987 | 43 | 20 | 0 | 8 |
| 1988 | 61 | 10 | 0 | 7 |
| 1989 | 50 | 17 | 2 | 14 |
| 1990 | 64 | 20 | 0 | 13 |

*Sources:* Information on lymphoma and myeloma, including plasmacytoma is taken from the Scottish National Cancer Registration Scheme. Information on the aplastic anaemia disease is taken from an analyses of discharges recorded in the Scottish Hospital Inpatient Statistics.

### NHS Reforms

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the expansion of trust hospitals and general practitioner fund-holding practices in Scotland.

**Mr. Lang:** Since the general election there has been a substantial increase in Scotland in declarations of interest, both in NHS trust status and in GP fund holding. It is evident that the benefits for patients are being recognised by those involved and I expect to see significant growth in both areas in the coming months.

### Homelessness

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of homeless people in Scotland in April 1989 and for the most recent date for which information is available.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** A total of 14,900 households, containing an estimated 31,600 people, were assessed as homeless and 8,100, containing an estimated 18,200 people, as potentially homeless in the year ending 31 March 1991. A total of 11,400 households were so assessed as homeless and 6,750 as potentially homeless in the year to March 1989; information is not available on the number of persons.

### Seabirds, Sutherland

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has received about the cause of death of the seabirds washed up on the beach to the north of Embo, east Sutherland in the week ending 5 June.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* Scottish Natural Heritage—SNH—has advised that the cause of death is unknown. The condition of the corpses of 177 birds of different species found at the location showed that they had died at various times and some were affected to varying degrees by oil.

Mortality of sea birds during the summer is not an uncommon occurrence. The SNH has reported that other east-facing beaches, subject similarly to the recent prolonged succession of easterly winds, have also accumulated dead birds in above average numbers.

A small quantity of oil identified as originating from the Beatrice Field was also found on the beach. An operation to clean the beach of oil was initiated promptly and was completed by 7 June.

### Access to Records

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to personal records for which he has responsibility; and what action he intends to take.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* A consultation exercise is currently under way to obtain the views of interested bodies about ways in which the existing legislation and practice on the subject of access to social work records might need to be modified in the light of the European Court's judgment in the Gaskin case.

## Rents-to-Mortgages

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of local authority tenants who have *(a)* applied and *(b)* purchased their home under the rents-to-mortgages scheme since its extension to local authority tenants; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 17 June 1992]:* Based on returns to 31 May 1992, a total of 846 local authority tenants have applied to purchase their home under the rents-to-mortgages scheme. Of these, 46 have already purchased, 336 have withdrawn their application and the remaining 464 applications are currently being processed. Many of those who have withdrawn their application have opted instead to purchase under the right to buy. The breakdown by local authority is shown in the table.

| *Authority* | *Total applications* | *Applications withdrawn* | *Sales* | *Applications in process* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Berwickshire | 7 | 3 | — | 4 |
| Ettrick and Lauderdale | 9 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Roxburgh | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Tweeddale | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Clackmannan | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Falkirk | 28 | 14 | — | 14 |
| Stirling | 11 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Annandale and Eskdale | 9 | 4 | — | 5 |
| Nithsdale | 13 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| Stewartry | 7 | 4 | — | 3 |
| Wigtown | 8 | 3 | — | 5 |
| Dunfermline | 28 | 13 | — | 15 |
| Kirkcaldy | 34 | 12 | 4 | 18 |
| North East Fife | 24 | 11 | — | 13 |
| Aberdeen | 102 | 29 | — | 73 |
| Banff and Buchan | 7 | 3 | — | 4 |
| Gordon | 25 | 6 | — | 19 |
| Kincardine and Deeside | 25 | 4 | — | 21 |
| Moray | 28 | 10 | — | 18 |
| Badenoch and Strathspey | 5 | 1 | — | 4 |
| Caithness | — | — | — | — |
| Inverness | 5 | 1 | — | 4 |
| Lochaber | 10 | 1 | — | 9 |
| Nairn | 3 | 1 | — | 2 |
| Ross and Cromarty | 5 | 4 | — | 1 |
| Skye and Lochalsh | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Sutherland | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| East Lothian | 36 | 16 | 9 | 11 |
| Edinburgh | 21 | 11 | — | 10 |
| Midlothian | 23 | 12 | 6 | 5 |
| West Lothian | 21 | 11 | — | 10 |
| Argyll and Bute | 18 | 7 | — | 11 |
| Bearsden and Milngavie | 12 | 2 | — | 10 |
| Clydebank | 6 | 1 | — | 5 |
| Clydesdale | 4 | 1 | — | 3 |
| Cumbernauld and Kilsyth | 5 | 4 | — | 1 |
| Cumnock and Doon Valley | 6 | 2 | — | 4 |
| Cunninghame | 14 | 8 | — | 6 |
| Dumbarton | 4 | 2 | — | 2 |
| East Kilbride | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Eastwood | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Glasgow | 23 | 15 | — | 8 |
| Hamilton | 21 | 5 | — | 16 |
| Inverclyde | 13 | 6 | — | 7 |
| Kilmarnock and Loudoun | 17 | 9 | — | 8 |
| Kyle and Carrick | 33 | 17 | 3 | 13 |
| Monklands | 10 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| Motherwell | 15 | 6 | — | 9 |
| Renfrew | 46 | 22 | 7 | 17 |
| Strathkelvin | 24 | 10 | — | 14 |
| Angus | 13 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Dundee | 7 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Perth and Kinross | 30 | 14 | — | 16 |
| Orkney | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Shetland | 2 | 1 | — | 1 |
| Western Isles | — | — | — | — |
| Dumfries and Galloway RC | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Strathclyde regional council | 2 | — | — | 2 |
| Total | 846 | 336 | 46 | 464 |

### Lobster Fisheries

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to amend the Sea Fisheries (Shellfish) Act 1967 in respect of the creation of enhanced lobster fisheries in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* My Department has recently been considering the results of research on the creation of enhanced lobster fisheries and whether any legislative changes should be introduced to facilitate such developments in Scotland. This raises complex issues which I am considering. I would consult Scottish fishery interests before bringing forward any proposals.

### Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and hydrochlor ofluorocarbons.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* Government policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances is set out in the 1990 environment White Paper, the first-year report following the White Paper and the environmental action guide for building and purchasing managers issued by the Department of the Environment in 1991. The Scottish Office follows this guidance. As yet there is no time scale for ceasing use or purchase of ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs, but the Scottish Office intends to do so as soon as possible.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The information required could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Dounreay

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions of the Paris convention apply to the discharges for the proposed extra storage capacity at Dounreay.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The proposed extension to the existing facility will not be subject separately to the provisions of the Paris convention. Radioactivity in the drainage water will be disposed of through the liquid effluent discharge pipe and will be included in the regular returns to the Paris commission of radioactive discharges to sea.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans Her Majesty's Government have to make available to Governments of nations bordering the North sea and north Atlantic copies of the environmental statement prepared in support of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority technology proposals to extend its storage capacity for low-level radioactive waste at its Dounreay plant.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The Government have no plans to make available copies of the environmental statement.

### Water Supply

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of water supply disconnections in each of the past five years for each regional and island council area.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* Water supplies to domestic consumers in Scotland may be disconnected only for short-term operational reasons, for example, to undertake repairs, make connections or plumbing alterations. Supplies to non-domestic consumers may also be disconnected for other reasons, including those arising from non-payment of water charges. Information on the number of disconnections is not held centrally.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 25 June 1992*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Rural Police

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it costs per year to keep a rural police officer in Wales; what was the comparable figure for 1982; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This information is not held centrally. The unit cost for a police officer in Wales in 1982-83 was £15,474, and the estimated unit cost for 1992-93 is £34,924.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rural police officers there are in Wales; what were the corresponding figures for 1980, 1985 and 1990; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Records of deployment of police officers to rural areas are not held centrally.

The table gives details of the total strength of the Welsh forces as at 31 December for the years in question:—

| *Year* | *Strength* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 6,260 |
| 1985 | 6,210 |
| 1990 | 6,399 |

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many rural police stations in Wales have been closed this year; how many closed in 1982; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many rural police stations there are in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for 1980, 1985 and 1990.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Police stations are not formally classified in this way. The opening and closing of individual police stations is a matter for the force concerned.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the recent Audit Commission report on rural police stations in north Wales.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** There has been no Audit Commission report dealing specifically with rural police stations in north Wales. The chief constable commissioned a report by the district audit office into the structure of his force. The report has been laid before the police authority and the force is now consulting widely with the local community.

### Immigration

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *10*, if he will give the latest position over the funding of the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** We will make a further announcement as soon as possible.

### Appeals

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many references to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 are under consideration by C3 division of the Home Office.

**Mr. Jack:** Any representations alleging wrongful conviction upon indictment are considered with a view to a possible reference to the Court of Appeal under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968. On 23 June 159 cases involving convictions on indictment and alleging wrongful conviction were under consideration by C3 division of the Home Office.

### Chelmsford Prison

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures his Department proposes to take to reduce overcrowding in Chelmsford prison;

(2) when he expects a reduction in overcrowding in Chelmsford prison;

(3) how many prisoners there were in Chelmsford prison on 12 December 1991 and 18 June 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In common with other local prisons, Chelmsford has maintained a substantial degree of overcrowding for some time. In recent months, as new accommodation elsewhere in the prison service estate has come on stream, the amount of overcrowding has been reduced. I cannot give any assurances on whether this welcome improvement will be sustained because this would be dependent on the number of prisoners committed into custody by the courts served by the prison. Further consideration is being given to measures to reduce overcrowding directly in Chelmsford prison and elsewhere. On 12 December 1991 the number of prisoners held in Chelmsford was 389, and on 18 June this year is was 352.

### County Council Elections

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department further to the oral answer on 22 June from the Secretary of State for Wales to the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, *Official Report*, column 4, whether he has yet decided to introduce legislation before 16 July to cancel or delay the county council elections to be held in Wales in 1993 in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I have nothing to add to my reply of 9 June 1992, at column 77. No decisions have yet been taken in this matter.

## Arrests (Evasions)

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of occasions in the past five years in which suspects have evaded arrest by securing information that the police were about to call at their homes.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This information is not available.

## Fire Service Vehicles

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responses it has had in response to the "Competing for Quality" consultation with regard to the maintenance of fire service vehicles; and if he will list those supporting, and those opposing, the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for fire service vehicles.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** With the exception of Hertfordshire, all fire authorities and fire service representative bodies in England and Wales have expressed opposition to compulsory competitive tendering for the maintenance of their vehicle fleets.

## Homosexuality

**Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of Thursday 18 June, *Official Report*, column *651*, if he will show for the last five years ranked by police authority, the total number of prosecutions for all offences involving consenting male homosexual activity where at least one partner was aged over 16 years and under 21 years.

**Mr. Jack:** Information for 1986 to 1990 by police force area is given in the tables. The offence of indecency between males by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 does not necessarily involve fully consensual behaviour.

*Table A*
*Number of males prosecuted for the offence of indecency between males by a man of the age of 21 or over with another male person under the age of 21 by police force area 1986-90*
*England and Wales*

| *Police Force Area* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 2 | 11 | 6 | 3 | — |
| Bedfordshire | 1 | — | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| Cambridgeshire | — | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Cheshire | — | 5 | 11 | 6 | 4 |
| Cleveland | — | — | 2 | 1 | — |
| Cumbria | 3 | — | — | 2 | 1 |
| Derbyshire | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 2 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 11 |
| Dorset | 3 | — | 7 | 17 | 6 |
| Durham | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Essex | 3 | — | 5 | 2 | 10 |
| Gloucestershire | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 3 |
| Greater Manchester | 7 | 8 | 4 | 16 | 24 |
| Hampshire | 5 | 7 | 13 | 2 | 21 |
| Hertfordshire | 2 | 7 | 7 | — | 1 |
| Humberside | 2 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 2 |
| Kent | 1 | 4 | 6 | 2 | — |
| Lancashire | 5 | 3 | 6 | 1 | 2 |
| Leicestershire | — | — | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Lincolnshire | — | — | 1 | 8 | — |
| London, City of | 6 | — | — | — | — |
| Merseyside | 1 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| Metropolitan Police District | 79 | 71 | 63 | 157 | 180 |
| Norfolk | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Northamptonshire | 1 | — | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Northumbria | 9 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 13 |
| North Yorkshire | 1 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 5 |
| Nottinghamshire | 7 | 6 | 1 | 25 | 62 |
| South Yorkshire | 2 | 33 | 16 | 16 | 5 |
| Staffordshire | 7 | 5 | 3 | 19 | 9 |
| Suffolk | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | — |
| Surrey | — | 1 | 3 | 2 | — |
| Sussex | 4 | 8 | 14 | 13 | — |
| Thames Valley | 4 | 3 | 17 | 15 | 8 |
| Warwickshire | 1 | 2 | 2 | — | 1 |
| West Mercia | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| West Midlands | 14 | 23 | 20 | 25 | 20 |
| West Yorkshire | 30 | 25 | 23 | 13 | 7 |
| Wiltshire | — | 2 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| ENGLAND | 222 | 260 | 286 | 395 | 428 |
| Dyfed Powys | 8 | — | — | 1 | — |
| Gwent | — | 1 | — | 1 | 1 |
| North Wales | 10 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| South Wales | 5 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| WALES | 23 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 17 |
| ENGLAND AND WALES | 245 | 270 | 292 | 404 | 445 |

TABLE B
*Number of males prosecuted for the offences of buggery or attempted buggery of a male of, or over 21 with another male under the age of 21 with consent by police force area*
*1986 to 1990*
*England and Wales*

| *Police force area* | *1986* | *1987* | *[1]1988* | *1989* | *1990* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | — | 1 | — | 1 | — |
| Bedfordshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cambridgeshire | — | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Cheshire | — | — | 2 | — | — |
| Cleveland | — | — | 3 | 1 | — |
| Cumbria | — | 1 | 1 | — | 2 |
| Derbyshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Devon and Cornwall | — | 3 | 1 | 1 | — |
| Dorset | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| Durham | — | 2 | — | — | — |
| Essex | — | — | — | — | — |
| Gloucestershire | 8 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Greater Manchester | — | — | 2 | — | — |
| Hampshire | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Hertfordshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Humberside | — | — | 2 | — | — |
| Kent | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Lancashire | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Leicestershire | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| Lincolnshire | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| London, City of | — | — | — | — | — |
| Merseyside | — | 1 | — | — | — |
| Metropolitan Police District | 2 | 2 | 2 | — | — |
| Norfolk | — | — | — | — | — |
| Northamptonshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Northumbria | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| North Yorkshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| Nottinghamshire | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| South Yorkshire | 3 | 1 | 1 | — | — |
| Staffordshire | — | — | — | — | 1 |

| Police force area | 1986 | 1987 | [1] 1988 | 1989 | 1990 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suffolk | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| Surrey | — | — | — | — | — |
| Sussex | — | — | — | — | — |
| Thames Valley | — | — | — | — | — |
| Warwickshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| West Mercia | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| West Midlands | 1 | — | — | 1 | — |
| West Yorkshire | 1 | — | — | — | 2 |
| Wiltshire | — | — | — | — | — |
| ENGLAND | 21 | 19 | 17 | 7 | 10 |
| Dyfed Powys | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Gwent | — | 1 | — | — | — |
| North Wales | — | — | — | — | — |
| South Wales | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | — |
| WALES | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | — |
| ENGLAND AND WALES | 24 | 21 | 18 | 8 | 10 |

[1] In Cleveland in 1988 there was one female prosecuted for the offence of attempted buggery of a male of or over 21 with another male under the age of 21 with consent—generally, conspiring, inciting, aiding, abetting, causing or permitting a crime is classified under the heading of the crime itself.

## Police Co-operation

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to review the procedures for co-operation and sharing of information between separate police constabularies in England and Wales in relation to the problems caused by new age travellers.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The policing of any event is an operational matter for the police, but my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State will very shortly be meeting with chief constables to consider the intelligence and liaison arrangements between police forces for handling new age travellers.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what mechanism exists for co-operation on areas of common concern between different police constabularies in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** Police forces co-operate in many ways, formal and informal, over matters of common concern. In the case of public order difficulties, by virtue of section 14 of the Police Act 1964, chief constables can draw on the assistance of mutual aid from neighbouring forces.

## Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those organisations he is consulting on proposals to amend the law on asylum seekers.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My right hon. and learned Friend and I are ready to hear the views of interested organisations.

## Juries

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations have been received about increasing the number of multiracial juries; whether he will introduce regulations to enable a multiracial jury to be appointed in cases where either the defence or prosecution request one; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** We have received no such representations, although I understand that this is an issue which has been put to the Royal Commission on criminal justice in evidence submitted to them. I understand also that the Lord Chancellor has received representations on the matter from the Society of Black Lawyers. We have no present plans for legislation in this area.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will introduce regulations to enable a mixed-sex jury to be appointed in cases where either the defence or the prosecution request one; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack:** We have no present plans to do so.

## Public Order

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to review the guidance issued by his Department to chief officers of police concerning the exercise of their powers under section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** On 22 May 1991 we issued guidance to the police on the application of section 39. In January 1992 we reviewed the police response to this guidance with the Association of Chief Police Officers who welcomed its introduction.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from police forces on the effectiveness of section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986 in dealing with mass trespass on private or common land.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** None, since 1990 when the Association of Chief Police Officers responded to the public evaluation of section 39.

## Obscene Phone Calls

**Mrs. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of obscene telephone calls were reported in the year 1991-92; how many offenders were charged; and how many were convicted.

**Mr. Jack:** It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify offences under section 43(1)(a) of the Telecommunications Act 1984—obscene, indecent, menacing or grossly offensive telephone calls—from other summary offences under the same Act. However, our statistics show that in 1990, there were 700 prosecutions and 520 convictions for summary offences as a whole under the aforesaid Act.

## Immigration

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions he has issued to entry clearance officers in British posts on the Indian sub-continent to expedite applications from spouses who have been waiting for more than five years to enter the United Kingdom; if similar instructions have been issued regarding other categories of settlement applicants; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I shall write to the hon. Member.

### Kuwait

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Kuwaiti-born Palestinians who have been refused entry to Kuwait and are in the United Kingdom have applied for an extension of their visa or applied for permanent settlement in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The information requested is not available.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the agreements between the European Community and *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** Both Switzerland and Liechtenstein have free trade agreements with the Community covering manufactured goods, and will be part of the European economic area when this comes into effect. In addition, each has a number of bilateral agreements with the Community.

### Pakistan

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for non-settlement entry clearance at the deputy high commission in Karachi have been outstanding for more than one month because the post requires information from the high commission in Islamabad.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The deputy high commission in Karachi has no outstanding applications for entry clearance awaiting information from the high commission in Islamabad.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many outstanding applications for entry clearance at the deputy high commision in Karachi are waiting for files which have been requested from the high commission in Islamabad.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The deputy high commission in Karachi has two outstanding applications for entry clearance awaiting information from the high commission in Islamabad. Both are settlement cases.

### South Africa

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the South African Government about the police killings over the past weekend and other violence.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We are in touch with all the main parties in South Africa. We have noted President de Klerk's firm commitment to bring those responsible for the tragic killings at Boipotang to justice. We have urged him to do so as quickly as possible.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Mellor:** I refer to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 June, *Official Report*, column *209*.

### China and Porcelain Artists

**Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the British China and Porcelain Artists Association to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

**Mr. Key:** Such an application was approved in principle by my right hon. Friend the then Minister for the Arts in September 1991.

## TRANSPORT

### Road Safety

**Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will offer advice to school governors on the development of road safety policies in schools.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** As part of our child road safety initiative which highlights road safety education in schools as a key area for action, I am anxious to encourage school governors to be involved in the development of school road safety policies. In support of this, my Department has just produced a road safety information leaflet for governors. The leaflet is widely available from local authority road safety officers in England and Wales and from my Department.

### M25

**Sir Michael Grylls:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to deal with increasing trafffic congestion on the M25.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am today announcing proposals for increasing the capacity of the M25 between junction 12, M3, and junction 15, M4.

Following very careful consideration of the options, I am proposing to provide new three-lane link roads to run either side of the existing motorway between these junctions.

The section of the M25 between the M3 and the M4 is the busiest motorway in the country carrying as many as 200,000 vehicles a day. Most of it is already four lanes in each direction, but further capacity is urgently needed to relieve congestion and ensure that this vital link in our motorway network can cope with future traffic growth.

The new roads will run adjacent to the motorway and will cater for traffic travelling between these junctions. This will improve the flow of traffic on the main carriageway and reduce accidents by separating through

traffic from vehicles joining and leaving the motorway. These improvements will discourage traffic from using unsuitable local roads to avoid congestion on the motorway.

Great emphasis will be placed on the environment in this project. The proposals include extensive landscaping, the planting of thousands of trees and shrubs and the erection of noise barriers.

All those affected will be fully consulted and their comments considered and reflected in the further design work. An environmental statement will be published when this work is completed.

I recognise that local people will be concerned about the effect of the scheme on their area. Exhibitions will be held shortly to provide the public with information about the proposals and to explain the next steps.

## Motor Cycle Noise Act 1987

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what factors have delayed the coming into force of the Motor Cycle Noise Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** When the 1987 Act, and the regulations to be made under it, are brought into force, it will be desirable also to have in place a related amendment of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 concerning motorcycle noise. We hope to go out to consultation on the amendment to the 1986 regulations by the end of this year. The bringing into force of the 1987 Act, and of the regulations to be made under it, will follow as soon as practicable thereafter.

## Jubilee Line

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much public money has been spent to date on research, development and associated costs on the Jubilee line extension.

**Mr. Norris:** Up to the end of the financial year 1991-92, some £100 million of public money had been spent on advance works, design, parliamentary work, land purchase, property purchase and project management for the Jubilee line extension. It is estimated that a further £18 million was spent in the first 12 weeks of this financial year.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the crossrail and the Chelsea-Hackey line proposals to be at a stage of development comparable to the present Jubilee line extension scheme.

**Mr. Norris:** These three projects are expected to proceed sequentially. Powers exist to build the Jubilee line extension; public, though not private, funding is in place. It will be some years yet before crossrail is ready to build: that will depend on the parliamentary process and the availability of funds. The Chelsea-Hackney line will follow on as permitted by the availability of funds, the capacity of the construction industry and the ability of the capital to absorb further major construction works.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of how many jobs will be created by the Jubilee line extension.

**Mr. Norris:** The construction of the Jubilee line extension is estimated to create direct employment on-site on civil works for some 4,000 people and off-site in manufacturing and supply of the order of five times as many more people.

## Traffic Calming

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what schemes he has approved, in which cities, for special funding for schemes costing less than £5 million for experimental traffic-calming package schemes in mixed residential/light commercial areas in the present financial year.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** No specific experimental traffic-calming schemes were approved for funding in the current financial year. Part of the transport supplementary grant settlement—minor works or credit approvals—allocated to English local highway authorities might be used for traffic-calming measures, but separate records are not kept.

## River Safety

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Hayes inquiry into river safety to report; and if he will make it his policy to publish the report before 16 July.

**Mr. Norris:** Mr. Hayes's report is currently being prepared for publication. I hope that it will be published before 16 July.

## Rail Privatisation

**Mr. Keith Hill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has undertaken recently to ensure that the pensions of both current and past British Rail employees are fully protected following future measures of privatisation.

**Mr. Freeman:** No decisions have yet been taken on the details of rail privatisation, but the Government have already made it clear that pension entitlements will be safeguarded. Detailed discussions with British Rail and its pensions advisers have begun.

## Wheel Clamping

**Sir Gerard Vaughan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislation to clarify the law on wheel-clamping vehicles on private land; and if he will make a statement.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to establish a licensing authority for private wheel clamping firms.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 18 June at column *611*.

## Biodiesel

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is considering to encourage the development of alternative fuels, such as biodiesel, for vehicles.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The Transport Research Laboratory is currently reviewing national and international research and experience in the use of a range of alternative fuels for road vehicles. This will include biofuels such as biodiesel.

The findings of this review will be used in further work to evaluate possible roles that alternative fuels might play in meeting our future transport needs.

### School Buses

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will repeal those parts of the Carrying Capacity Regulations 1984 and the Certificate of Conformity Regulations that allow three children up to 14 years of age to be counted as two, thereby sharing double seats on school buses.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I am currently reviewing the Carrying Capacity Regulations 1984 and associated regulations in the bus sector.

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what orders have been placed by British Rail for sleeper train services through the channel tunnel; how many of the train sets on order will be capable of using the east coast mainline; and when he now expects these train sets to be available for service.

**Mr. Freeman:** No formal order can be made for sleeper rolling stock until current negotiations between British Rail, its continental partners and the European Commission on its proposed night service joint venture have been completed. If the order is made soon, the railways hope to start night services during 1995. All of the train sets would be capable of running on the east coast main line although the railways have no current plans to run night services on this line.

## EDUCATION

### Students

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the prospect of student hardship this summer; and if he intends to increase the availability of the access funds.

**Mr. Forman:** My right hon. Friend regularly receives representations on all aspects of student support. We have made substantially more money available in maintenance support for students. The full-year loan and grant together are now over 30 per cent. higher than the grant alone was two years ago. We recently announced a 4·5 per cent. increase in average student resources for the 1992-93 academic year thus maintaining their value in real terms. Access funds are a relatively small and supplementary part of a generous package of student support. We believe that the sums made available to the funds should be sufficient for their purpose, if properly targeted.

### Manchester Business School

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consideration he has given to the letter sent to him by the Manchester Association of University Teachers on 12 June, concerning the future of the Manchester business school; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about Manchester business school. He is concerned at the rift that has developed between the lay members of the MBS council and the university of Manchester authorities.

Manchester business school is a constituent part of the university and my right hon. Friend has no power to intervene in the internal affairs of universities. He has suggested that both sides should approach an independent figure of standing who is mutually acceptable to them to act as mediator. I am replying to the Manchester Association of University Teachers' letter of 12 June to this effect.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Forman:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *208-9*.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what approvals have been given to grant-maintained schools to dispose of capital assets; and how much of the proceeds, in each case, have been returned to the former maintaining authority.

**Mr. Forth:** One grant-maintained school has received my right hon. Friend's consent to the sale of a piece of surplus land. The attribution of proceeds between the school and the former maintaining authority is currently being determined. Another school has received consent for the disposal of part of its premises by annual lease, and for the renewal of this lease.

### City Technology Colleges

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the total amounts and individually for each city technology college, including planned and proposed colleges, the private donations that have been *(a)* pledged, *(b)* confirmed, *(c)* committed and *(d)* actually paid over; and if he will indicate in each case the nature of donations in kind rather than cash.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not available centrally in the form requested.

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will update the table given in his answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, columns *602-4*, giving the latest available information in respect of each city technology college or proposed and planned city technology college.

**Mr. Forth:** The table covers announced CTCs:

| Name | Site | LEA | Opening dates | Planned number of pupils | Total capital cost £ million | Exchequer contribution £ million | Sponsors' contribution (i) committed[2] £ million | Sponsors' contribution (ii) confirmed[2] £ million | Principal sponsors | Contracts awarded to sponsors | School closure involved | Has a ballot of parents been held and with what result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kingshurst CTC, Solihull | Kingshurst School site | Solihull | 1988 | 1,150 | 9·71 | 7·60 | 2·11 | 2·89 | Hanson Trust | None | No | No |
| Emmanuel College, Tyneside | St. John Fisher School site | Gateshead | 1990 | 900 | 8·61 | 6·89 | 1·72 | 1·60 | Peter Vardy | Building contract – Laings Northern | No | No |
| Dixons CTC, Bradford | Newby Square, Bradford | Bradford | 1990 | 980 | 9·16 | 7·33 | 1·83 | 2·89 | Dixons plc, Mr. Haking Woog | None | No | No |
| Leigh CTC, Dartford | Downs School site | Kent | 1990 | 1,250 | 8·95 | 7·16 | 1·79 | 1·76 | Sir Geoffrey Leigh | None | Yes | No[3] |
| Britschool CCTA, Croydon | Site of Selhurst Tertiary Centre | Croydon | 1991 | 720 | 10·00 | 8·00 | 2·00 | 2·42 | The British Record Industry Trust | None | No | No |
| Djanogly CTC, Nottingham | Sherwood Rise, Nottingham | Nottinghamshire | 1989 | 1,000 | 9·75 | 8·20 | 1·56 | 1·90 | Mr. Harry Djanogly | None | No | No |
| Macmillan College, Teesside | St. Michael RC School, Middlesbrough | Cleveland | 1989 | 1,100 | 8·45 | 6·74 | 1·71 | 1·51 | BAT Industries plc | None | No | No |
| Harris CTC, Norwood | Sylvan School site, Croydon | Croydon | 1990 | 1,100 | 8·66 | 6·93 | 1·73 | 1·78 | Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust | None | Yes | Yes, Majority against |
| Bacon's College, Bermondsey | Bacon's School site, Southwark | Southwark | 1991 | 1,100 | 15·47 | [4]13·87 | [4]1·60 | [5]1·00 | Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust/ Southwark Diocesan Board of Education | None | Yes | No |
| Haberdashers' CTC, New Cross | Haberdashers' Aske's, Hatcham, School site | Lewisham | 1991 | 1,150 | 9·15 | 5·70 | 3·45 | [6]4·45 | Haberdashers' Company as Trustees of Robert Aske Charity | None | Yes | Yes, Majority in favour |
| Brooke CTC, Corby | Great Oakley, Corby | Northants | 1991 | 900 | 10·19 | 8·15 | 2·04 | 2·04 | Mr. Hugh de Capell Brooke | None | No | No |
| Landau Forte College, Derby | Wood Street, Derby | Derbyshire | 1992 | 900 | 10·20 | 8·16 | 2·04 | 2·05 | The Landau Foundation Forte plc | None | No | No[7] |
| Thomas Telford School, Telford | Old Park, Telford | Shropshire | 1991 | 1,000 | 10·75 | 8·40 | 2·35 | 2·35 | The Mercers Tarmac plc | None | No | No[7] |
| ADT College, Wandsworth | Mayfield School | Wandsworth | 1991 | 1,000 | 11·32 | 9·06 | 2·26 | 2·39 | ADT plc | None | No | No[7] |
| John Cabot CTC, Bristol | Kingswood, Bristol | Avon | 1993 | 900 | To be determined | Not more than 80 per cent. of cost | At least 20 per cent. of cost | At least 20 per cent. of cost | Wolfson Foundation and Cable and Wireless plc | None | No | No[7] |

[1] Committed sponsorship contributions represent agreed percentage contributions to CTC capital cash limits as secured in formal funding agreements with CTCs.
[2] Confirmed sponsorship includes sponsorship beyond the cash limit.
[3] Public consultations were held by Kent on its proposals to close the Downs School. One statutory objection containing 62 signatures was made to the section 12 proposal subsequently published.
[4] The sponsors commitment is stated net of the proceeds of sale of the site of the former school: the Exchequer contribution will be reduced by the amount of the proceeds of sale.
[5] The confirmed contribution is net of the proceeds of sale of the former school site and of contributions to community provision and the chapel.
[6] This figure includes the donation of the present site, which has been valued at £3·445 million.
[7] In each case, LEA, local schools and other interests consulted on proposal to establish CTC.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Civil Servants

**Dr. Bray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the civil service grades or grade equivalents of the chief scientific adviser in the Office of Science and Technology, the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council, the secretary of the Medical Research Council and the chief scientific adviser of the Ministry of Defence.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The civil service grades (or grade equivalents) are:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chief Scientific Adviser in the Office of Science and Technology | Grade 2 |
| Chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council | Grade 1a |
| Secretary of the Medical Research Council | Grade 2 |
| Chief Scientific Adviser of the Ministry of Defence | Grade 1a |

### Departmental Management

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans he has to introduce business discipline and entrepreneurial methods into the management of Government departments.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Government are committed to improving management in government for the benefit of customers, taxpayers and staff by drawing upon a wide range of proven management practices. The next steps initiative has already made use of many such practices: performance pay; businesslike reports and accounts; clear accountability; customer surveys; trading funds; and the financial flexibility to carry money between financial years. And many agency chief executives with business experience have been appointed following open competition. About half the civil service is already operating along next steps lines and the aim is that all the executive functions of government will, so far as practicable, be operating along these lines by the end of 1993.

The citizens charter will place additional requirements on Government Departments to become consumer orientated, including published standards of service; consultation with users in setting those standards; greater openness and an end to anonymity; and improved systems for responding when things go wrong.

The citizens charter also calls for a more direct link between performance and reward. I and my colleagues therefore intend to ensure that performance pay schemes are introduced throughout the civil service and that the process of delegating management responsibility for the civil service from the Office of Public Service and Science and the Treasury to Departments and agencies continues. In addition, in line with the commitments in the "Citizen's Charter" White Paper and its companian "Competing for Quality", all Departments and agencies are currently seeking to take forward the Government's market testing initiative and extend competitive tendering to new areas closer to the heart of government.

In all of this work I am able to draw directly upon the business experience of the citizens charter panel of advisers, chaired by Sir James Blyth, and the efficiency unit, led by Sir Peter Levene.

### Agencies

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the budgets of each executive agency.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Agency budgets are a matter for the responsible Minister, although in the case of trading funds there will not necessarily be an approved budget as such.

Where an agency has published a corporate plan, a copy of which will be placed in the House of Commons Library, the corporate plan will normally contain this information. A number of Departments also include this information in the relevant section of their departmental report.

In addition, the table in the "Next Steps Annual Review", Cm. 1760 gives information on the operating costs of all the agencies which had been established as at 1 April 1991.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992

**Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he proposes to make the necessary order to bring into force the Access to Neighbouring Land Act 1992; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Subject to making the necessary amendments to rules of court, on which consultation will begin shortly, the Lord Chancellor hopes to be in a position to bring the Act into force in January 1993.

### County Court Payments

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average time taken for county courts to make payments to beneficiaries from sums paid into county courts.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Moneys paid into a county court are required by rule to be paid out within one week of receipt. Where paid in satisfaction of a claim, payment is normally made within one week of acceptance.

Moneys transferred by a county court to the court funds office for investment are generally paid out within seven working days of demand.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what regulations exist to ensure the prompt payment of money paid into county courts to beneficiaries.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The payment out of moneys paid into a county court or invested by the court funds office is governed by part VII of the Court Funds Rules 1987.

Moneys paid into a county court are required to be paid over to creditors within one week of receipt, except where paid in satisfaction of a claim.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Sovereign Debt

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for each of the last five years what was the amount of corporation tax forgone from British banking institutions in relation to the writing-down of developing country sovereign debt; and how much sovereign debt has *(a)* been cancelled or *(b)* been made available for debt-for-environment or debt-for-development swaps, in each of the last five years as a result of this writing-down.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Provisions for doubtful sovereign debt by banks operating in the United Kingdom are estimated to have reduced corporation tax receipts in the last five years by the following amounts:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 240 |
| 1988-89 | 550 |
| 1989-90 | 360 |
| 1990-91 | 720 |
| [1]1991-92 | 190 |

[1] Provisional.

I regret that the further information requested is not available centrally.

## Foreign Workers

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to alter the tax treatment of non-United Kingdom citizens working in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Dorrell:** My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

## Biodiesel

**Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to introduce new measures to reduce taxation on alternative fuels such as biodiesel.

**Sir John Cope:** The European Commission has produced a draft directive on the reduction of excise duties on motor fuels from agricultural sources—biofuels. These proposals were reported to the House in an explanatory memorandum on Com(92)36. A detailed assessment of the proposal is currently being made by interested Government departments. As yet, there have been no Community discussions on the draft directive.

## Public Accounts Committee

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the recommendations made by the Committee of Public Accounts during 1990-91 were accepted by the Government; if he will make an estimate of the savings that were made as a result; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government pay close attention to all the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations and have agreed with the majority of them. It is not possible to quantify resulting savings.

## Value Added Tax

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he intends to make in the scheme announced in the budget whereby the largest VAT payers would be required to make monthly payments on accounts from the autumn of 1992.

**Sir John Cope:** Customs have now completed the consultation exercise launched on Budget day on the details of the scheme. All representations made have been considered most carefully. I can now confirm that the broad outlines of the scheme announced by my right hon. Friend will remain unchanged. However, we have been able to agree to some modifications which respond to points made in consultation.

Businesses with net VAT payments of over £2 million will still pay monthly amounts on account instead of paying quarterly as at present. However, a business will not now be included in the scheme where exceptional transactions in the year ending 31 March 1991 caused it to exceed the £2 million VAT threshold.

Second, lower monthly payments will be permitted where a change in business circumstances results in a reduction of VAT liability to 80 per cent. or less of that in the reference period. This responds to concerns that the original two-thirds trigger was too low.

In addition, we intend to review the criteria for selection for inclusion in the scheme once we have some experience of its operation.

We have received representations that monthly payments on account should be confined to those EC importers who will gain from the introduction of the postponed accounting system. We have considered these very carefully, but have concluded that this is likely to be inconsistent with the single market and that the scheme would be at serious risk of successful challenge in the European Court of Justice.

## Sanctions

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has made in its investigations into potential sanctions-breaking trade between British and Danish companies and Iraq before, at the time of, and since the Gulf war; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir John Cope** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* Investigation into potential sanctions breaking trade is a matter for the Commissioners of Customs and Excise who can prosecute in appropriate cases. It would not be appropriate for information relating to any particular investigation to be made public other than in the course of court proceedings. If the hon. and learned Member has information regarding any potential sanctions-breaking trade, Customs and Excise would be grateful to receive it.

## Earning Statistics

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1992 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

**Mr. Dorrell** *[pursuant to his reply, 22 June 1992, c. 4]:* I regret that, due to a typographical error, one of the figures in the table was incorrect. The answer should read as follows:

Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds announced in the 1992 Budget are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice, retention of the regime indexed as appropriate for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

*Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime*

| *Range of individual's income in 1992-93* £ | *Total reduction* £ million | *Average reduction* £ per annum |
|---|---|---|
| Under 5,000 | 500 | 150 |
| 5,000 to 10,000 | 3,200 | 400 |
| 10,000 to 15,000 | 4,500 | 730 |
| 15,000 to 20,000 | 4,300 | 1,060 |
| 20,000 to 30,000 | 5,000 | 1,590 |
| 30,000 to 50,000 | 3,600 | 2,960 |
| Over 50,000 | 10,300 | 21,000 |
| TOTAL | 31,400 | 1,200 |

[1] Individuals liable to income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Kashmir

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had recently with the Prime Minister of Pakistan concerning Kashmir; what agreement was reached on representations to be made on behalf of Her Majesty's Government about Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

**The Prime Minister:** I discussed Kashmir with Mr. Nawaz Sharif on 17 June. I repeated our hope that Pakistan and India will agree to a means of solving this dispute through negotiation. I made clear our concern about interference in Kashmir by militants from Pakistan, and also briefed Mr. Nawaz Sharif on our representations to the Indian Government about the need to respect human rights and the need for a political process in Kashmir.

### Intellectual Property Rights

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the United States Administration on intellectual property rights regarding forestry products and medicines.

**The Prime Minister:** All these issues were discussed in the negotiations leading up to the biodiversity convention, in which representatives of the United States Administration were involved.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Council of Europe

**Mr. David Howell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will announce the composition of the United Kingdom delegation for the 44th session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

**The Prime Minister:** The 44th session parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe was opened in Strasbourg on 4 May. The next meeting of this session will be held in Budapest on 30 June, and the delegation from the United Kingdom, for this meeting and the remainder of the session, will consist of 19 Members of the Conservative party, 15 Members of the Labour party and two Members from the minority parties.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the parties concerned.

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the assembly of the Western European Union, which next meets in Paris on 30 November 1992.

*Representatives from the Government Benches will be:*

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg becomes Lord Finsberg on 27 June. He will be a member of the delegation, and its leader, in his capacity as a member of the upper House.

The hon. Members for:
Warwick and Leamington (Sir Dudley Smith)
Calder Valley (Sir Donald Thompson)
Twickenham (Mr. Toby Jessel)
Poole (Mr. John Ward)
Ashford (Sir Keith Speed)
Medway (Dame Peggy Fenner)
Lewes (Mr. Tim Rathbone)
Bournemouth, East (Mr. David Atkinson)
and the Earl of Dundee

*Representatives from the Labour party will be:*

The hon. Members for:
Wentworth (Mr. Peter Hardy)
Tooting (Mr. Tom Cox)
Wansbeck (Mr. Jack Thompson)
Newham, North West (Mr. Tony Banks)
Don Valley (Mr. Martin Redmond)
Manchester, Central (Mr. Robert Litherland)
and Lord Kirkhill

*The representative from the minority parties will be:*

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir Russell Johnston)

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates:

*From the Government Benches:*
Reading, West (Sir Tony Durant)
Norfolk, North (Mr. Ralph Howell)
Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Andrew Bowden)
Ravensbourne (Sir John Hunt)
Wellingborough (Mr. Peter Fry)
Bridlington (Mr. John Townend)
Newark (Mr. Richard Alexander)
Lord Newall and Baroness Hooper

*From the Labour Benches:*
Pollok (Mr. James Dunnachie)
Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Norman Godman)
Newport, East (Mr. Roy Hughes)
Easington (Mr. John Cummings)
Leigh (Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe)
Leicester, South (Mr. James Marshall)
Hodge Hill (Mr. Terry Davis)
and Baroness Lockwood

*From the minority parties:*
Lord Mackie of Benshie

## ENVIRONMENT

### Methane

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in assisting the development and usage of systems to recover methane from landfills and waste-water treatment plants.

**Mr. Maclean:** My Department in its comprehensive waste management research programme has sponsored a considerable body of work on the optimisation of landfill gas production and methods relating to its improved management. Apart from research into the control of landfill gas for safety, there are 10 research projects set up in collaboration with the energy technology support unit of the Department of Trade and Industry on the recovery and utilisation of the gas.

Direct support for demonstration projects is given by the Department of Trade and Industry. Nine projects receiving support have shown that the extraction and utilisation of landfill gas in boilers, kilns and for the generation of electricity can be economically attractive. Renewables orders made under the 1989 Electricity Act

which require regional electricity companies to contract for non-fossil fuel sources of electricity have brought forward 53 projects with a total capacity of 85MW.

## London Docklands

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the provisions of the 1991 Treasury guidelines contained in "Economic Appraisal in Central Government: "A Technical Guide for Government Departments" were applied in the investment appraisal used in deciding that civil servants should be moved to the docklands, in particular paragraphs 3.2 to 3.12 dealing with alternative options; and if he will publish the investment appraisal.

**Mr. Howard:** On 2 June I announced, *Official Report*, column 707, that some 2,000 civil servants in my Department would move to docklands subject to securing fully commercial terms giving value for money to the taxpayer. In making a final decision full account will be taken of the Treasury guidelines. To publish details of the appraisal now would jeopardise the negotiations that are currently taking place with developers. I will, however, consider making available the factors which were taken into account, including the investment appraisal, in due course, but that, too, would be subject to commercial confidentiality.

## Environmental Bulletins

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Departmental library receives environmental bulletins or newsletters produced by counterpart departments in other European Community countries.

**Mr. Howard:** No. I am not currently aware of any such bulletins, but I should be happy to consider whether to order any that are drawn to my attention.

## Housing Investment Programme

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were *(a)* the initial housing investment programme allocations and *(b)* the housing investment programme bids for each district council in Cumbria in constant 1991-92 prices for each year since 1979.

**Mr. Baldry:** The available information on housing investment programme bids and allocations is as follows. The table also gives corresponding figures for gross capital expenditure on housing.

*Housing Investment Programme (HIP) bids, allocations and gross capital expenditure in Cumbria by district, 1979-80 to 1992-93*[1]

*Allerdale* — *£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| | *HIP bids* | *Initial allocations* | *Final allocations* | *Gross capital expenditure*[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 17,581 | n/a | 12,610 | 12,299 |
| 1980-81 | 17,521 | n/a | 8,285 | 9,526 |
| 1981-82 | 12,589 | n/a | 5,492 | 6,238 |
| 1982-83 | 10,824 | n/a | 7,513 | 7,251 |
| 1983-84 | 8,252 | 4,765 | 10,039 | 11,593 |
| 1984-85 | 8,812 | 4,987 | 5,336 | 5,452 |
| 1985-86 | 11,704 | 4,100 | 4,100 | 5,537 |
| 1986-87 | 17,339 | 3,348 | 3,348 | 4,732 |
| 1987-88 | 10,325 | 3,012 | 3,277 | 4,195 |
| 1988-89 | 8,700 | 2,274 | 3,133 | 4,199 |
| 1989-90 | 6,514 | 2,512 | 3,098 | 8,305 |

| | *HIP bids* | *Allocations* | *Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals* | *Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 7,537 | 3,009 | 3,009 | 5,136 |
| 1991-92 | 6,125 | 2,656 | [3]3,741 | n/a |
| 1992-93 | 6,840 | 3,167 | [3]3,167 | n/a |

*Barrow-in-Furness*

*£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| | *HIP bids* | *Initial allocations* | *Final allocations* | [2]*Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 9,076 | n/a | 5,331 | 5,876 |
| 1980-81 | 8,635 | n/a | 4,698 | 4,332 |
| 1981-82 | 7,290 | n/a | 3,830 | 3,523 |
| 1982-83 | 4,131 | n/a | 4,281 | 4,268 |
| 1983-84 | 4,465 | 3,815 | 4,942 | 5,911 |
| 1984-85 | 7,209 | 3,687 | 4,021 | 7,969 |
| 1985-86 | 8,953 | 3,154 | 3,154 | 5,648 |
| 1986-87 | 12,758 | 2,511 | 3,081 | 6,082 |
| 1987-88 | 12,517 | 2,318 | 3,569 | 6,170 |
| 1988-89 | 13,934 | 1,751 | 4,353 | 6,547 |
| 1989-90 | 9,675 | 1,320 | 3,178 | 6,600 |

| | *HIP bids* | *Allocations* | *Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals* | [2]*Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 5,575 | 2,442 | 2,638 | 4,157 |
| 1991-92 | 4,667 | 1,917 | [3]1,942 | n/a |
| 1992-93 | 4,445 | 1,614 | [3]1,614 | n/a |

*Carlisle*

*£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| *Year* | *HIP bids* | *Initial allocations* | *Final allocations* | [2]*Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 12,956 | n.a. | 9,610 | 10,585 |
| 1980-81 | 11,217 | n.a. | 6,644 | 6,285 |
| 1981-82 | 10,305 | n.a. | 5,176 | 5,465 |
| 1982-83 | 10,271 | n.a. | 5,402 | 5,958 |
| 1983-84 | 8,829 | 4,158 | 5,303 | 7,567 |
| 1984-85 | 11,118 | 4,599 | 4,599 | 6,413 |
| 1985-86 | 12,941 | 3,524 | 3,524 | 7,434 |
| 1986-87 | 14,676 | 3,069 | 3,069 | 8,625 |
| 1987-88 | 18,522 | 2,589 | 2,721 | 9,680 |
| 1988-89 | 17,440 | 2,046 | 2,348 | 8,869 |
| 1989-90 | 16,299 | 1,451 | 2,085 | 11,618 |

| *Year* | *HIP bids* | *Allocations* | *Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals* | [2]*Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 14,638 | 4,880 | 5,426 | 7,486 |
| 1991-92 | 16,882 | 4,301 | [3]5,454 | n.a. |
| 1992-93 | 17,957 | 5,225 | [3]5,225 | n.a. |

*Copeland*

*£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| | *HIP bids* | *Initial allocations* | *Final allocations* | [2]*Gross capital expenditure* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 9,294 | n/a | 8,064 | 7,388 |
| 1980-81 | 13,823 | n/a | 5,671 | 4,705 |
| 1981-82 | 10,494 | n/a | 5,366 | 5,415 |
| 1982-83 | 5,131 | n/a | 4,610 | 4,538 |
| 1983-84 | 4,741 | 3,384 | 3,916 | 5,429 |
| 1984-85 | 6,832 | 3,436 | 3,436 | 4,903 |

| | HIP bids | Initial allocations | Final allocations | [2]Gross capital expenditure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1985-86 | 6,597 | 2,668 | 2,668 | 5,740 |
| 1986-87 | 11,920 | 2,303 | 2,303 | 4,917 |
| 1987-88 | 7,114 | 1,961 | 2,196 | 9,465 |
| 1988-89 | 7,438 | 1,493 | 1,970 | 9,557 |
| 1989-90 | 6,128 | 1,067 | 2,299 | 8,881 |

| | HIP bids | Allocations | Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals | [2]Gross capital expenditure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 4,284 | 2,038 | 2,038 | 3,211 |
| 1991-92 | 6,262 | 1,515 | [3]1,731 | n/a |
| 1992-93 | 9,012 | 1,623 | [3]1,623 | n/a |

*Eden*

*£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| | HIP bids | Initial allocations | Final allocations | [2]Gross capital expenditure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 2,949 | n/a | 2,503 | 1,909 |
| 1980-81 | 3,271 | n/a | 2,299 | 2,113 |
| 1981-82 | 3,514 | n/a | 2,180 | 1,933 |
| 1982-83 | 3,072 | n/a | 1,984 | 2,502 |
| 1983-84 | 3,097 | 1,397 | 1,734 | 3,320 |
| 1984-85 | 3,042 | 1,726 | 1,726 | 1,741 |
| 1985-86 | 2,567 | 1,308 | 1,308 | 2,039 |
| 1986-87 | 3,298 | 1,186 | 1,186 | 1,714 |
| 1987-88 | 3,567 | 962 | 966 | 2,055 |
| 1988-89 | 2,903 | 671 | 671 | 1,884 |
| 1989-90 | 2,431 | 521 | 521 | 1,851 |

| | HIP bids | Allocations | Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals | [2]Gross capital expenditure |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 2,337 | 825 | 825 | 2,529 |
| 1991-92 | 2,156 | 948 | [3]1,371 | n/a |
| 1992-93 | 2,781 | 1,115 | [3]1,115 | n/a |

*South Lakeland*

*£ thousands (1991-92 prices)*

| | HIP bids | Initial allocations | Final allocations | Gross capital expenditure[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1979-90 | 5,447 | n/a | 4,202 | 3,206 |
| 1980-81 | 5,060 | n/a | 3,711 | 2,537 |
| 1981-82 | 5,168 | n/a | 3,988 | 3,403 |
| 1982/83 | 4,218 | n/a | 3,008 | 4,373 |
| 1983-84 | 4,257 | 3,384 | 4,000 | 4,661 |
| 1984-85 | 6,186 | 3,177 | 3,177 | 2,914 |
| 1985-86 | 6,265 | 2,409 | 2,431 | 4,889 |
| 1986-87 | 5,686 | 2,041 | 2,066 | 5,069 |
| 1987-88 | 4,977 | 1,770 | 1,790 | 5,878 |
| 1988-89 | 5,957 | 1,235 | 1,235 | 4,951 |
| 1989-90 | 6,661 | 868 | 868 | 6,986 |

| | HIP bids | Allocations | Allocations plus supplementary credit approvals | Gross capital expenditure[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 6,303 | 1,234 | 1,234 | 3,983 |
| 1991-92 | 6,141 | 1,399 | [3]1,631 | n/a |
| 1992-93 | 5,834 | 1,590 | [3]1,590 | n/a |

[1] A new capital finance system was introduced at the beginning of 1990-91 and the figures for allocations for 1990-91 and subsequent years are, therefore, not directly comparable with the figures for earlier years. Under the new system the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a direct borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, cross-service, basic credit approval, which is set at a level which takes account of each authority's ability to finance expenditure from usable capital receipts.

[2] Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to augment the borrowing power of their HIP allocations by using the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts.

[3] These figures reflect the latest position and are not yet final.

n/a = Not available.

## Housing, Cumbria

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new houses were started in each district in Cumbria since 1979 in *(a)* the private sector, *(b)* by housing associations and *(c)* by local authorities.

**Mr. Baldry:** Estimates of housebuilding starts by sector for each local authority in Cumbria are shown in the publications "Local Housing Statistics" and "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Area".

Figures for 1979 are in table 5 of the May 1980 edition —issue No. 53—of "Local Housing Statistics". Figures for 1980 to 1988 are in tables 1.1 to 1.9 of "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas: 1980 to 1989". Revised 1989 figures are in table 1*(b)* of the April 1991 edition—issue No. 97—of "Local Housing Statistics" and figures for 1990 and 1991 are in tables 1*(a)* and 1*(b)* of the April 1992 edition—issue No. 101. Copies of all these publications are in the Library.

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons were on council housing waiting lists in each district in Cumbria in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1991.

**Mr. Baldry:** Local authorities report the number of households on their council housing waiting lists in their annual housing investment programme—HIP—returns.

The figures as at 1 April 1991 are in column B5 of the "1991 HIP1 All Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library.

The information was not reported in 1979.

## Hydrochlorofluorocarbons

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what position the Government will be recommending to the EC on hydrochlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The United Kingdom, with other member states, has agreed that the Community should support a quantitative limit on HCFC consumption, together with controls on use and a phase out date. The Community's proposal for HCFC controls is one of the issues to be discussed at the meeting of the Montreal protocol open-ended working group between 8 and 17 July.

## Waste Management Licences

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his timetable for the implementation of section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

**Mr. Maclean:** No timetable for implementation of section 143 has yet been decided, but an announcement will be made in due course.

## Homelessness

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons were accepted as homeless under the provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 and part III of the Housing Act 1985 in Barrow-in-Furness in each year since 1978.

**Mr. Baldry:** The information for 1978 is contained in edition No. 52, table 12 of "Local Housing Statistics: England and Wales", a copy of which is available in the Library. For the other years, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, columns *569-70*.

## International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *208-9*.

## Mortgage Payments

**Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further action he intends to take to assist home owners facing repossession who are in difficulties meeting their mortgage payments.

**Sir George Young:** All mortgage borrowers will have been helped by the 5 per cent. reduction in base rates since October 1990.

The Government agreed a package of measures to help borrowers at risk of repossession with the Council of Mortgage Lenders in December 1991. We reviewed progress on that package with CML members on 2 June. They estimate that measures taken since December will save some 55,000 repossessions this year, and that the number of homes repossessed this year will fall.

## Water Use

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the percentage figures for water use in each of the main water regions for *(a)* agricultural, *(b)* industrial, *(c)* commercial and *(d)* domestic use, respectively.

**Mr. Maclean:** The available statistics are published in the annual "Digest of the Environmental Protection and Water Statistics". Copies of the digest were placed in the House Library.

## Waste

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he takes to ensure that all transporters of waste adhere to regulations governing the safe control of waste; and if he will bring forward proposals to empower waste regulation authorities with rights to inspect waste transporter premises and stop check waste vehicles within the area of the authority's function.

**Mr. Maclean:** Since 1 April 1992 it has been an offence under the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 for any person to transport controlled waste in the course of his business unless he is registered with the appropriate waste regulation authority; or benefits from an exemption provided under the Controlled Waste (Registration of Carriers and Seizure of Vehicles) Regulations 1991.

Under 7(1) of the 1989 Act, as amended, waste regulation authorities have powers to enter and inspect premises; and under section 5 of that Act waste regulation authorities and police constables have powers to stop and search vehicles in certain circumstances. Guidance on the 1989 Act and the 1991 regulations has been provided to waste regulation authorities in DOE circular 11/91.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that waste regulation authorities which receive imported waste are fully aware of those countries through which waste travels.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 provide a system of consignment notes, one of which must be sent to the competent authority of the state of destination. In the case of shipments of waste for disposal, this copy will show in code form all the other EC member states through which the consignment is due to pass.

The current draft of the proposed EC waste shipments regulation would improve upon these requirements. Consignment notes would show routeing arrangements, and this would apply to shipments of certain types of waste for recovery as well as to shipments for disposal.

## Housebuilding

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the level of new starts in local authority housing annually, for the years 1980 to 1991;

(2) what was the number of housing association new starts, annually, for the years 1980 to 1991.

**Mr. Baldry:** Estimates of the numbers of new housebuilding starts by local authorities and by housing associations for 1980 to 1990 are published in table 6.1 of the annual publication "Housing and Construction Statistics 1980-1990: Great Britain". Provisional estimates for 1991 are shown in the quarterly publication "Housing and Construction Statistics; Part 1", in table 1.2 of the December quarter 1991 edition, No. 48.

## Local Authority Housing

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will show the level of capital spending for local authority housing in the years 1980 to the present day and also as a proportion of gross domestic product, annually, for the same period, in *(a)* England and *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside.

**Mr. Baldry:** Information on housing expenditure by local authorities is only available on a financial year basis. Financial year GDP figures are not available for England or regions of England. The available information, which relates to gross capital expenditure, including spending from receipts, is as follows.

*Gross capital expenditure on local authority housing*

*£ million*

| | *England cash value* | *Yorkshire and Humberside cash value* |
|---|---|---|
| 1979-80 | 2,947 | 218 |
| 1980-81 | 2,729 | 193 |
| 1981-82 | 2,632 | 164 |
| 1982-83 | 3,235 | 221 |
| 1983-84 | 3,571 | 280 |
| 1984-85 | 3,501 | 237 |
| 1985-86 | 3,023 | 225 |
| 1986-87 | 3,017 | 217 |
| 1987-88 | 3,272 | 261 |
| 1988-89 | 3,604 | 282 |
| 1989-90 | 5,123 | 347 |
| [1]1990-91 | 3,141 | 266 |
| [2]1991-92 | 2,801 | n/a |

[1] Provisional.
[2] Estimated.
n/a = Not available.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the *(a)* highest, *(b)* lowest and *(c)* average rents for each local authority housing department in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Baldry:** I have today placed in the Library of the House a table showing provisional figures for the average weekly rent in 1992-93 for each local authority in England. No data is held centrally on highest and lowest rents within authorities. For information relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland I refer the hon. Member to the respective Secretaries of State.

## Pentachlorophenol

**Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being taken to control the discharge of pentachlorophenol from grey cloth; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** Since 1 January 1988 the EC dangerous substances directive 86/280/EEC has required all surface waters to meet an environmental quality standard in respect of pentachlorophenol—(PCP—of 2 microgrammes per litre as an annual average.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, on behalf of the Secretary of State, has reviewed a number of trade effluent consents granted to traders discharging effluent which may contain PCP.

As a result, traders have been given a period of time in which to take measures to control the discharge of PCP in order to enable the environmental quality standard in the receiving water to be achieved. The most effective measure is for traders to tackle the problem at source by accepting only those supplies uncontaminated with PCP, and I understand that they are having some success in this respect.

## New Developments (North-East)

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate how much public money has been spent on the Twelve Quays, East Quayside and Teesdale developments; and how that money has been spent.

**Mr. Redwood:** The information for East Quayside and Teesdale is shown in the tables. Public expenditure on the Twelve Quays site up to 31 March 1992 amounted to £487,000 for various advance works, including a feasibility study, wall repairs and causeway works.

*Expenditure by Tyne and Wear UDC on East Quayside up to 31 March*

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Land Aquisition | 6·037 |
| Land Reclamation | 2·469 |
| Roads and Services | 0·160 |

*Expenditure by Teesside UDC on Teesdale up to 31 March 1992*

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| Environmental Improvements | 9·998 |
| Land Aquisition | 10·092 |
| Land Reclamation | 18·602 |
| Services | 1·828 |
| Roads and Transport | 9·162 |
| Community Support | 0·568 |
| Housing | 0·867 |

## Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was Her Majesty's Government's position on the discussion of international transport and trade in radioactive waste at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Government support the aims of the Agenda 21 chapter concerned with radioactive wastes, including the international movement of such wastes. A key priority of the chapter is to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency's code of practice on the international transboundary movement of radioactive waste.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the types and amount of radioactive products disposed of on site by Barnsley district general hospital since 17 July 1986;

(2) if he will give the amounts of radioactive waste burned at Barnsley district general hospital for each year since the issue of authorisation in 1986.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The total radioactivity contained in the wastes incinerated by the hospital since 1986 is as follows:

| | *Megabecquerels* |
|---|---|
| 1986 | 41 |
| 1987 | 50 |
| 1988 | 41 |
| 1989 | 30 |
| 1990 | 9 |
| 1991 | 11 |

During 1991 the daily average disposal rate was 28 Kilobecquerels. This is less than the activity of a household smoke detector.

1 Megabecquerels = 1000 Kilobecquerels.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reviews have taken place since 1986 of the authorisation given to Barnsley and district general hospital to burn radioactive waste.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* All authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances

Act 1960 are kept under review, and revised when appropriate. In this case, the use of radioactive materials and the disposal of radioactive wastes by the hospital have remained broadly constant over the period. No changes to the terms of the authorisation have therefore been needed.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are taken to monitor the levels of radioactivity of *(a)* the staff, *(b)* the patients and *(c)* persons residing in close proximity of Barnsley district general hospital following the authorisation given to that hospital to burn radioactive waste.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* So far as the staff and patients are concerned, the hospital undertakes its own radiological monitoring as part of its procedures to ensure the safe keeping and use of radioactive materials and wastes.

In relation to the monitoring of radioactivity in the vicinity of the hospital, I would refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer to him today.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what records are held of the levels of radioactivity in and around Barnsley prior to 1986 and since that date;

(2) what monitoring of the environment has taken place in and around Barnsley to determine levels of radioactivity since 1986.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The wastes discharged to the atmosphere from Barnsley district general hospital have an extremely small radioactive content and pose no radiological hazard. Environmental monitoring in the vicinity of the hospital is therefore not necessary.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the terms and conditions of the certificate issued to Barnsley district general hospital authorising the burning of radioactive waste.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The certificate of authorisation issued by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 permits the hospital to incinerate each day material containing up to 2 megabecquerels of radioactive waste. A copy of the certificate will be placed in the House Library.

### First-time Home Owners

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of first-time home owners in 1992 and the comparable figures for 1987; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* Information is only available for the numbers of first-time buyers who are purchasing their homes with a mortgage through a bank or building society.

The latest available information is for the first quarter of 1992, when there were 106,370 first-time purchasers with such mortgages in the United Kingdom compared with 131,200 in the same quarter of 1987.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Auditing

**Mr. Austin Mitchell** (Great Grimsby): To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the post 1979 inspectors' reports relating to investigations carried out under the Companies Act 1985 have been prepared by partners from auditing firms criticised in his Department's inspectors' reports.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Nine accountant inspectors appointed since 1979 have been partners in firms which have previously been the subject of criticism in inspectors' reports under the Companies Acts.

### Weights and Measures

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inspections were made, by local authority areas, by weights and measures inspectors in 1981, 1988, 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. Leigh:** The total number of enforcement visits by weights and measures inspectors was as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 857,527 |
| 1990 | 741,085 |
| 1991 | 711,205 |

Information for 1981 is not available.

### High-definition Television

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contribution will be required from the United Kingdom towards the £600 million EC subsidy for the development of high-definition television; what is his policy on making that contribution; and what benefits will accrue to the British television industry from the development of a European system of HDTV.

**Mr. Leigh:** The call to spend 850 mecu—about £600 million—on wide-screen and high-definition television services broadcast by satellite and cable is made in the European Commission's proposal for a Council decision on an action plan for the introduction of advanced television services in Europe. Such services will use the European developed MAC—multiplex analogue components—transmission standards. The expenditure is proposed over a five-year period. Our contribution would be calculated on a gross contribution of about 17·5 per cent. less abatement, which would depend on the level of United Kingdom receipts. However, the Government have rejected the sum of 850 mecu as unacceptably high. During negotiations on the proposal, the Government have said that they are prepared to consider a case for a considerably lower sum, provided that it is accompanied by a rigorous justification for the use of public money. We have yet to see a convincing business case presented for any expenditure.

The Government recognise the potential consumer appeal of wide-screen and high-definition television. There is a market opportunity for such MAC-based services which the satellite and cable TV industry and equipment manufacturers may wish to exploit. The Government believe that it is principally through the cooperation of

broadcasters and manufacturers that the market will take off. What benefits the British television industry derives from wide-screen and high-definition television must depend primarily on the investments which the individual commercial players decide to make, based on their perception of the development of the market and the needs of consumers.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to introduce mandatory recovery or recycling of chlorofluorocarbons, hydrochlorofluorocarbons and hydrofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** My Department already encourages the voluntary recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting substances. Legislation on the management of industrial and domestic waste is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish recent research undertaken on hydrochlorofluorocarbons for his Department by Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** The results of the study were given by the consultants at a presentation on 4 March 1992, which was attended by representatives of those industry sectors concerned and non-governmental organisation. A copy of the executive summary, which was issued at the presentation, has been placed in the Library.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on the publication of United Kingdom production figures of ozone-depleting chemicals; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** Information on United Kingdom production of ozone-depleting substances is not published separately for reasons of commercial sensitivity. Production figures are however reported to the Commission of the European Communities which published production levels for the Community as a whole.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the 10 largest users in the United Kingdom of each of *(a)* hydrochlorofluorocarbons, *(b)* chlorofluorocarbons, *(c)* methyl chloroform, *(d)* halons and *(e)* carbon tetrachloride; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Leigh:** On *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(e)* the information is not available.

On *(d)* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the publication "Use of Halons in the United Kingdom and the Scope for Substitution" published by HMSO/Department of the Environment 1991, a copy of which is in the Library.

## Glass (Safety)

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to include BS 7449: 1991 within a forthcoming European safety standard for glass used in furniture manufacture.

**Mr. Leigh:** British Standard 7449: 1991 has been put forward to the European standards body—by the British Standards Institution as a basis for the inclusion of glass specifications in a draft European standard on safety requirements for cabinets and general storage furniture for domestic use.

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to include BS 7449: 1991 within the general safety requirment.

**Mr. Leigh:** Standards of safety are relevant for the purposes of the general safety requirement as soon as they are published. British Standard 7449: 1991—Specification for inclusion of glass in the construction of furniture, other than tables or trolleys, including cabinets, shelving systems and wall hung or free standing mirrors—was published by the British Standards Institution in June 1991. From this date it has been open to the courts to take account of BS 7449 when deciding whether the relevant products satisfy the general safety requirement in relation to aspects covered by this standard.

## International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Needham:** I refer my hon., Friend to the answer given on 24 June *Official Report*, col *208-9* by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

## Tobacco

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of export earnings from tobacco products in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1989-90 and *(d)* 1991-92 in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices.

**Mr. Needham:** The available information is given in the following table.

*Total United Kingdom exports of tobacco products*[1]

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1978 | 193·0 |
| 1979 | 232·1 |
| 1984 | 409·2 |
| 1985 | 456·3 |
| 1989 | 512·1 |
| 1990 | 639·8 |
| 1991 | 763·6 |

[1] Tobacco products are defined as item 122 of the Standard International Trade Classification, Revisions 2 and 3.

*Source:*

Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of imports of finished tobacco products in *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1984-85, *(c)* 1989-90 and *(d)* 1991-92 in cash terms and at 1991-92 prices.

**Mr. Needham:** The available information is given in the following table.

*Total United Kingdom imports of tobacco products*[1]

| | £ million |
|---|---|
| 1978 | 39·5 |
| 1979 | 45·4 |
| 1984 | 87·1 |
| 1985 | 113·8 |
| 1989 | 107·1 |
| 1990 | 126·5 |
| 1991 | 148·4 |

[1]. Tobacco products are defined as item 122 of the Standard International Trade Classification, Revisions 2 and 3.
*Source:* Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

## Regional Aid

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure on regional financial assistance to the Darlington area in each year since the last revision of the assisted areas map in 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Regional financial assistance in the Darlington area comprises expenditure under the regional selective assistance scheme and capital expenditure by English Estates on land and buildings. The amount spent since 1984-85 at current prices and at 1984-85 prices is set out in the table.

*Regional financial assistance*
*Darlington area*

£000

| | Regional selective assistance | | English estates capital expenditure | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Current prices | 1984-85 prices | Current prices | 1984-85 prices |
| 1984-85 | 608 | 608 | 117 | 117 |
| 1985-86 | 637 | 604 | 356 | 337 |
| 1986-87 | 465 | 427 | 30 | 27 |
| 1987-88 | 408 | 355 | 29 | 25 |
| 1988-89 | 722 | 586 | — | — |
| 1989-90 | 258 | 196 | — | — |
| 1990-91 | 1,065 | 750 | — | — |
| 1991-92 | 172 | 113 | — | — |

## Mersey Barrage

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what controls exist to ensure that the feasibility studies being carried out by the Mersey Barrage Company are of sufficient quality to enable reliable predictions of the likely environmental impacts of the proposed Mersey tidal power barrage.

**Mr. Eggar:** The Mersey Barrage Company has set up three working parties covering water quality, fisheries, and all environmental issues, to assist in ensuring that the work assessing the environmental impact of the barrage is of sufficient quality. The working parties include representatives from both statutory and non-statutory environmental organisations.

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how variations in the operational procedures of the proposed Mersey tidal power barrage have been accounted for in the stage III studies of environmental impacts; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Eggar:** In the current phase of work, variations in the operational procedures of the proposed Mersey barrage are being examined in relation to environmental impact by, for example, considering the intertidal area available for the wintering bird population. This work is expected to be reported later in the year.

## Exports

**Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many British companies export 70 per cent. or more of their production; and how many of these have received the Queen's award to industry.

**Mr. Needham:** Complete information on individual United Kingdom companies' exports and turnover is not collected by central Government. However, the table shows those companies who were among the United Kingdom's top 100 exporters and whose exports represented more than 70 per cent. of their total United Kingdom turnover in 1990. All these companies, with the exception of Siebe plc, have won a Queen's award for export or technology.

*United Kingdom companies exporting more than 70 per cent. of total United Kingdom turnover*[1]

| Company | Exports 1990 (£ million) | Percentage of United Kingdom turnover |
|---|---|---|
| Rolls Royce[2,4] | 2,347·0 | 70·7 |
| Lucas[3] | 633·0 | 82·6 |
| J. C. Bamford[4] | 277·3 | 73·9 |
| Catepillar UK[5] | 250·3 | 81·8 |
| Associated Octel[4] | 205·0 | 84·2 |
| De La Rue[6] | 147·9 | 74·0 |
| Allied Colloids[6] | 140·1 | 77·4 |
| Siebe[6] | 130·4 | 86·2 |
| Amersham International[6] | 114·7 | 76·6 |
| Polaroid[4] | 112·5 | 76·6 |

[1] Based on top 100 United Kingdom exporters in 1990.
[2] Incorporates NEI PLC.
[3] Year ended 31 July 1990.
[4] Year ended 31 December 1990.
[5] Year ended 30 November 1990.
[6] Year ended 31 March 1991.
*Source: Financial Times.*

## Sub-Post Offices

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to prevent the Post Office restricting sub-post offices from making payment facilities available for the customers of South Wales Electricity.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* Customers of South Wales Electricity will continue to be able to pay their bills at post offices. The only change which has occurred is that this work is now negotiated centrally by Post Office Counters, rather than individually by sub-postmasters on their own account. Such operational matters are the responsibility of the Post Office board.

# LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

## International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Newton:** Neither the Privy Council Office, nor a body acting on its behalf, has any agreements with either Switzerland or Liechtenstein.

## DEFENCE

### Radiation Exposure

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish an update of table 1, page 44, printed in HC 479, Session 1989-90 for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992;

(2) if he will publish an update of tables 1 to 22, pages 29 to 36, printed in HC 479, Session 1989-90 for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Aitken:** I will place in the House of Commons Library data tables updating for 1990 and 1991 those to which the hon. Member refers. Data for 1992 will not be available until after the year end.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish an update of tables 1 to 4, pages 50 to 51, printed in HC 479, Session 1989-90 for the years 1990, 1991 and 1992.

**Mr. Aitken:** The tables referred to were part of the memorandum submitted by the National Radiological Protection Board to the Defence Committee in May 1990, and such updating could only be done by the board, subject in certain cases to approval by other organisations. A request for this information is being made to the board. I will write to the hon. Member when it is available.

### Married Quarters

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the numbers and location of empty married quarters in North Yorkshire.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** As at 31 March 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, 382 MOD-owned service married quarters were vacant in North Yorkshire. The breakdown by location was as follows:

| *Location* | *Number vacant* |
|---|---|
| HMS Forest Moor | 4 |
| Bedale | 1 |
| Catterick Garrison | 111 |
| Dishforth | 64 |
| Guisborough | 1 |
| Ripon | 12 |
| Topcliffe | 7 |
| Harrogate | 30 |
| Church Fenton | 52 |
| Fylingdales | 9 |
| Leeming | 6 |
| Linton-on-Ouse | 85 |
| Total | 382 |

This figure represents 8·8 per cent. of the stock and is below the management margin advised by outside consultants as appropriate to meet defence requirements.

Many of these properties were either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work or modernisation and some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly.

In addition, two properties in Whitby and one in Ripon were in the process of being sold.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much liquid radioactive waste is expected to be dealt with by the new A91 building when the new A90 building comes on stream.

**Mr. Aitken:** The A91 radioactive liquid effluent treatment plant is being constructed to process wastes from a number of facilities, including A90, at AWE. It is expected to handle some 12,000 to 15,000 cu m of liquid waste per annum.

### Aldermaston

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many reportable incidents or accidents took place at atomic weapons research establishment, Aldermaston in each year since 1962; and if he will detail where possible the type of accident or incident that occurred.

**Mr. Aitken:** The total number of reportable incidents or accidents in each of the years 1962 to 1991 was:

| *Year* | *Total* |
|---|---|
| 1962 | 30 |
| 1963 | 24 |
| 1964 | 18 |
| 1965 | 19 |
| 1966 | 20 |
| 1967 | 26 |
| 1968 | 17 |
| 1969 | 32 |
| 1970 | 35 |
| 1971 | 21 |
| 1972 | 29 |
| 1973 | 32 |
| 1974 | 27 |
| 1975 | 33 |
| 1976 | 36 |
| 1977 | 38 |
| 1978 | 52 |
| 1979 | 41 |
| 1980 | 34 |
| 1981 | 36 |
| 1982 | 45 |
| 1983 | 38 |
| 1984 | 24 |
| 1985 | 22 |
| 1986 | 45 |
| 1987 | 42 |
| 1988 | 43 |
| 1989 | 49 |
| 1990 | 41 |
| 1991 | 38 |

As a result of the variety of legislation governing the reporting of accidents and incidents over the past 30 years the classification of various categories of incident is a complicated matter. I shall write to the hon. Member giving details of the legislation, explanations of the classification categories and the figures for each category.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place copies in the Library of the results of the studies carried out over the last 20 years on the levels of radiation present within any form of wildlife living within the perimeter fence of AWRE Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** A single study involving rabbits taken from inside and outside a specific compound within the AWE perimeter fence was conducted in 1977. The results showed barely detectable differences in contamination at a level

that is radiologically insignificant. No other studies have been undertaken, nor are any considered necessary, since regular on-site monitoring of soil and vegetation shows insignificant levels or radioactivity.

Certain details in the 1977 study report relating to activities carried out at specific sites at Aldermaston are classified. However, my officials are preparing a declassified version of the report which I will place in the Library in due course.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much low, intermediate and high-level waste is expected to be produced and stored at AWRE Aldermaston over the next 10 years.

**Mr. Aitken:** The estimated volumes of intermediate and low level waste generated at AWE Aldermaston to the end of 2001 will be about 2,300 and 36,000 cu m respectively. No high-level waste is produced there. Long term storage of all intermediate and some low-level wastes is carried out safely in purpose built stores at the site pending disposal to the national repository which is planned to be available in 2005. Until then, all intermediate-level waste will continue to be stored on the site. However, most of the low-level waste is regularly disposed of by approved means at the existing land burial site, operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Drigg in Cumbria.

### HMS Challenger

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made in its efforts to dispose of the former Royal Navy seabed operations vessel HMS Challenger; whether a ship has been identified to operate the LR5 submersible in addition to CS Alert; what steps have been taken to use or dispose of the towed unmanned submersible; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Aitken:** The marketing of HMS Challenger and its towed unmanned submersible system is continuing. A number of vessels have been identified that would be capable of operating the LR5 submersible. We are considering the way forward.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much low, intermediate and high-level waste is at present stored at AWRE Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** At December 1991, which is the latest date for which figures are available, 1,800 cu m of low level waste and 2,100 cu m of intermediate level waste were stored at AWE Aldermaston.

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of the results of the studies carried out over the last 20 years on the levels of radioactive contamination present in soil within the perimeter fence of AWRE Aldermaston.

**Mr. Aitken:** The information as requested is not readily available and can be produced in an appropriate form only at disproportionate cost. However, Aldermaston conducts an extensive programme of external environmental monitoring whose results are made available annually to the statutory authorities and local authorities. I will place a copy of the most recent issue of the off-site environmental report, which includes trends over many years, in the Library of the House.

### Atomic Weapons Research Establishments

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims for compensation have been received by his Department since 1962 from past or present employees of the atomic weapons research establishments at *(a)* Aldermaston, *(b)* Burghfield and *(c)* Cardiff; what illnesses those claims were for; and how many have resulted in payments being made.

**Mr. Aitken:** Records of claims dating back to 1962 are not available. The more recent statistics are held in a manner which does not make it possible to answer the hon. Member's question without disproportionate cost. I will write to the hon. Member.

### Loch Lomond-Faslane Road

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of his Department's road from Loch Lomond to Faslane.

**Mr. Aitken:** This private road through Glen Fruin continues to provide a dedicated route for traffic connected with the planning and development of the Clyde submarine base. Under the terms of the planning conditions set by the Secretary of State for Scotland such use will cease and the glen will be restored to its former condition by no later than January 1997.

### Nuclear Testing (Nevada)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom nuclear warhead testing programme in Nevada of the one-year moratorium on nuclear testing approved by the United States Congress.

**Mr. Aitken:** As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear on 12 May at column 90, the United Kingdom has a continuing requirement to sustain a minimum programme of nuclear tests to maintain effectiveness and safety of our nuclear deterrent. United States policy is a matter for the United States Administration.

## HEALTH

### Dentistry

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the recent Department of Health survey on dental practitioners' remuneration.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 2 June at column *451*.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made by her Department of regional variations in the actual expenses incurred by dentists.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** No such assessment has been made. The assessment of dentists' expenses made by the dental rates study group is based on national averages.

The only regional element in the present system is in respect of dentists' business rates. Since April 1991, provided dentists can demonstrate a certain commitment to the NHS, these have been reimbursed directly.

For the future, the Government remain committed to a fundamental review of dental remuneration and are looking to that review to develop a system which more effectively and fairly remunerates all dentists in the NHS for the important work they do.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her recent decisions with regard to the balancing mechanism for the payment of general dental practitioners and give the grounds on which she decided to set aside the advice of the pay review body on this matter.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This advice has not been set aside. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) on 23 June at columns *161-62* announced a revised fee scale to be introduced on 8 July which does not involve recovery of overpayments made in earlier years.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing the average and median fee income payable to dentists for national health service work in each national health service region, and nationally, for each of the last three financial years.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Dentists' median earnings by region are not available for 1989-90. Information for 1990-91 and 1991-92 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The table shows dentists' mean earnings in each regional health authority and their median earnings in England and Wales for the three financial years 1989-90 to 1991-92.

*Average fee earnings per dentist by region*[1]

| *Regional health authority* | *1989-90 Average (mean) fee earnings*[2] £ | *1990-91 Average (mean) fee earnings*[2] £ | *1991-92 Average (mean) fee earnings* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Northern | 65,143 | 73,794 | 89,483 |
| Yorkshire | 67,341 | 74,968 | 89,584 |
| Trent | 70,997 | 79,378 | 96,491 |
| East Anglia | 66,129 | 74,033 | 93,910 |
| North West Thames | 53,200 | 59,102 | 70,704 |
| North East Thames | 63,595 | 69,472 | 83,661 |
| South East Thames | 61,271 | 66,948 | 78,969 |
| South West Thames | 58,206 | 62,092 | 69,325 |
| Wessex | 62,852 | 68,904 | 82,595 |
| Oxford | 63,279 | 66,627 | 77,229 |
| South Western | 60,785 | 67,041 | 81,212 |
| West Midlands | 70,727 | 76,728 | 94,781 |
| Mersey | 65,249 | 72,616 | 89,827 |
| North Western | 68,752 | 75,604 | 91,834 |
| Wales | 65,067 | 71,382 | 89,434 |
| England and Wales mean | 63,865 | 70,265 | 84,833 |
| median[3] | 63,717 | 69,677 | 85,139 |

[1] Per principal in the data of the Dental Rates Study Group. Essentially those dentists who have been in contract for the complete financial year.

[2] These earnings exclude a small amount paid to dentists participating in the capitation trial.

[3] Estimated from group frequency data.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations she has received from dentists in North Staffordshire about the proposed reduction in fees.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** We have received a number of letters from dentists in North Staffordshire about the proposed reduction in fees.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the extent of dental decay in *(a)* North Staffordshire, *(b)* the West Midlands region and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Figures on dental decay are not collected centrally for district or regional health authorities. Information on dental decay among five and 12-year-old children in North Staffordshire district is available from surveys by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry. The 1989-90 survey of five-year-olds showed an average of 1·74 decayed, missing and filled teeth. The 1988-89 survey of 12-year-olds showed an average of 1·72.

The latest figures available for the United Kingdom are from the child dental health survey of 1983 and the adult dental health survey of 1988. In 1983, the average number of decayed or filled deciduous teeth for five-year-olds was 1·8. The average number of decayed, missing and filled teeth for 12-year-olds was 3·1 permanent teeth. In 1988, among dentate adults in the United Kingdom, the average number of missing teeth was 7·8, decayed or unsound teeth 1 and filled teeth 8·4.

**Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of (i) full-time and (ii) part-time posts on the establishment of the Dental Practice Board; what additional work has been received by the Dental Practice Board as a result of the approvals it is now required to give; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There were 1,087 full time staff and 487 part time staff employed by the Dental Practice Board when it replaced the Dental Estimates Board on 1 April 1989. We are discussing with the board the implications of the additional work on prior approval for courses of treatment.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of patients registered, and courses of treatment undertaken in England with general dental practitioners for each year since 1988-89.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The introduction of capitation treatment for children from 1 October 1990, means that it is not possible to provide a consistent data series on the number of courses of dental treatment to children. The other information requested is given in the table.

*General dental services—England*

| *Year* | *Number of adult courses of treatment scheduled* | *Number of adults registered*[1] | *Number of children registered*[1] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 24,206,520 | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1989-90 | 22,809,160 | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1990-91 | 22,558,739 | 10,234,160 | 3,847,454 |
| 1991-92 | 24,273,099 | 19,203,525 | 6,207,294 |

[1] The new contract on 1 October 1990 introduced registration for adults and children.

## Hospital Waiting Lists

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the purchaser or provider in the internal market is the holder of, and responsible for, hospital waiting lists.

**Mr. Sackville:** Purchasers have a responsibility to maintain a record of all their residents waiting for

treatment regardless of where they are waiting. Equally, providers are responsible for maintaining a record of the patients waiting for treatment at their units.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by her Department or a body acting on behalf of her Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** There are no such agreements.

### Adoption

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which other countries have signed the agreement with the Romanian adoption committee; how many children have been adopted under the terms of the agreement; and what steps she has taken to satisfy herself that the agreement is working satisfactorily.

**Mr. Yeo:** I understand from the Romanian Committee for Adoptions that as of 1 June 1992, the following countries have signed an agreement with it.

| | |
|---|---|
| Belgium | Italy |
| Canada | Sweden |
| Denmark | Switzerland |
| Finland | United Kingdom |
| France | United States of Ameria |
| Holland | |

No children have been adopted by prospective adopters in the United Kingdom under the new arrangements. The first tranche of five applications is currently being processed. We shall continue to review the working of the agreement.

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she is making with the review of responses to the consultation paper on inter-country adoption; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** Responses to the four consultation documents, including inter-country adoption, were considered by the interdepartmental working group as part of its work in reviewing adoption law. We have received a copy of the working group's report which we are now studying.

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much funding is being provided for the new overseas adoption helpline project; what arrangements are being made to provide independent management for the project; and what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the arrangements to publicise this project to all those with a potential interest.

**Mr. Yeo:** A grant of approximately £43,000 has been awarded to the overseas adoption helpline for a period of six months in the first instance. The project is hosted by the Bridge Child Care Consultancy. A project board has been set up whose functions include the provision of independent professional advice. We shall be making arrangements for publicity shortly.

### Lung Cancer

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many Liverpool people died of lung cancer last year; what percentage of women and men in Liverpool died of lung cancer last year compared with the national average; what preventative measures she plans; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In 1991 a total of 527 residents of the area covered by Liverpool district health authority died from lung cancer diseases—ICD 162—malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung.

On the basis of 1990 population data, standardised mortality ratios, which take account of the age and sex of the population, indicate that 65 per cent. more men and 79 per cent. more women died of these diseases in Liverpool compared with the average for England and Wales. Population figures for 1991 are not yet available.

It is estimated that, in the United Kingdom, 80 per cent. of deaths from lung cancer are smoking related. Besides general advice designed to encourage smokers to give up and more importantly to persuade people not to start, the Government are engaged in specific programmes of publicity and education aimed at vulnerable groups such as teenagers and pregnant women.

### Maternity Services

**Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will respond to the Second Report of 1991-92 from the Health Committee on Maternity Services before 16 July.

**Mr. Sackville:** We shall be responding as soon as possible.

### Disability

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure of the number of people who are registered disabled in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Yeo:** The latest figures for England are given in the table. Information on people who are registered as disabled is collected triennially from the registers maintained by local authorities. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

| | *Number* | *(as at 31 March)* |
|---|---|---|
| People registered as: | | |
| Deaf or hard of hearing | 108,000 | (1989) |
| Handicapped (General Classes)[1] | 1,259,000 | (1990) |
| Blind or partially sighted | 230,000 | (1991) |

[1]Primary handicap is neither visual or auditory

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she proposes to make for the national health service management executive to oversee the work of NHS trusts; and where the NHS management executive will base its work of overseeing trusts in the Northern region.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** National health service trusts account to the NHS management executive, NHSME, through the six NHSME outposts which became operational in April as an interim measure, pending the management executive's review of options for the longer term. The north-east outpost, which deals with trusts sited within the northern region, is based in Leeds.

### Food Safety

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that opportunities for children in residential care to share in cooking and catering are not unduly constrained by the terms of the Food Safety Act 1990 or regulations made consequent on that Act.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 June at column *708*.

### Hayley Slennett

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with Guy's hospital trust on behalf of Hayley Slennett and her parents; and if she will make a statement.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** None. Hayley Slennett's treatment was the responsibility of Guy's Hospital Trust, and the doctors concerned.

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total bill paid by the Slennett family for treatment to Hayley Slennett at Guy's hospital trust; and how much of it will be received by the national health service.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The terms on which Hayley's treatment was carried out is a matter between Hayley's parents and Guy's hospital. Any private patient income received by the hospital is retained locally.

### Paediatric Cardiology

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for paediatric cardiology in each of the regions in England.

**Mr. Sackville:** Waiting time information on paediatric cardiology is not collected centrally.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Pensions Equality

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the saving to the British pensions industry of the protocol on the Barber judgment restricting equality of pensions to new claimants after 17 May 1990, expressing this saving as an annual amount; and what is the basis on which the calculation was made.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Government Actuary has estimated that the costs for United Kingdom industry could amount to around £50 billion, using his 1987 survey of occupational pensions and interpreting retrospection as meaning equal treatment for all periods of pensionable service before 17 May 1990, including the recalculation of existing benefits in payment, and equalisation is based on the better terms available to either sex. Allowing for the normal practice of spreading the costs over a period of up to 15 years, the annual cost would be about £4 billion. In addition to the protocol, the Government are a party to supporting the Coloroll case to seek confirmation from the European Court of Justice that the Barber judgment does not apply to pensionable service before the date of that ruling, 17 May 1990.

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the timing of the discussion period relating to the equalisation of the pension age for men and women; and when a decision is expected.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 8 June at column *53*.

### War Disability Benefit

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receiving war disability pension are also in receipt of each other benefit, including state retirement pension.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information is not available.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received war disability pension in 1962, 1972, 1982 and 1992.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information is in the table.

| *Date* | *War disablement pensions in payment* |
|---|---|
| 31 December 1962 | 487,341 |
| 31 December 1972 | 357,750 |
| 31 December 1982 | 247,420 |
| 1 May 1992 | 197,764 |

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Scott:** The Government have a bilateral social security agreement with Switzerland but not with Liechtenstein.

A multilateral agreement covering all countries in the European economic area—EEA—including the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, is expected to come into effect on 1 January 1993. Under this agreement, the European Community social security regulations for migrant workers will be extended throughout the EEA.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants for disability living allowance are currently awaiting a decision; and if he will explain the reasons for the time taken.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the right hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Income Support

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements are made for the payment of benefits to those of no fixed abode.

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 15 June, *Official Report*, column *385*, what stage arrangements for publication of the York university report on the social fund have reached; and whether he will place a copy in the Library pending full publication.

**Mr. Scott:** The report will be published following examination by Ministers. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library at the same time as it is published.

### British Pensioners

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those countries where *(a)* British pensioners are not in receipt of annual increments and *(b)* British pensioners are in receipt of annual increments, giving in each case the number of such pensioners thought to be currently resident in each country.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The tables show the numbers of pensioners in overseas countries where United Kingdom retirement and widow's pensions were paid at 31 December 1991. Table (A) lists the countries where annual pension upratings are not paid, and table (B) lists the countries where they are.

*Table (A): Number of retirement pensioners and widows benefit beneficiaries in overseas countries where annual pension increases are not paid*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Albania | 6 |
| Algeria | 5 |
| Andorra | 165 |
| Angola | 1 |
| Anguilla | 83 |
| Antigua and Barbuda | 208 |

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Argentina | 198 |
| Ascencion Island | 3 |
| Australia | 144,381 |
| Bahamas | 148 |
| Bahrain | 27 |
| Bangladesh | 3,856 |
| Belize | 29 |
| Benin | 2 |
| Bolivia | 8 |
| Botswana | 73 |
| Brazil | 276 |
| Brunei | 17 |
| Bulgaria | 8 |
| Burma | 3 |
| C.I.S. | 748 |
| Cameroon | 3 |
| Canada | 108,385 |
| Cayman Islands | 50 |
| Central African Republic | 3 |
| Chile | 75 |
| China | 18 |
| Colombia | 24 |
| Cook Islands | 3 |
| Costa Rica | 16 |
| Cote D'Ivoire | 1 |
| Cuba | 1 |
| Czechoslovakia | 59 |
| Djibouti | 82 |
| Dominica, Commonwealth of | 552 |
| Dominican Republic | 157 |
| Ecquador | 12 |
| Egypt | 60 |
| El Salvador | 2 |
| Ethiopia | 33 |
| Falkland Islands and Dependencies | 14 |
| Faroe Islands | 6 |
| Fiji | 41 |
| Gambia | 30 |
| Ghana | 99 |
| Grenada | 659 |
| Guatemala | 7 |
| Guinea | 2 |
| Guyana | 198 |
| Haiti | 1 |
| Honduras | 6 |
| Hong Kong | 616 |
| Hungary | 209 |
| India | 3,637 |
| Indonesia | 27 |
| Iran | 3 |
| Iraq | 1 |
| Japan | 68 |
| Jordan | 11 |
| Kampuchea | 1 |
| Kenya | 504 |
| Kiribati | 5 |
| Kuwait | 5 |
| Lebanon | 17 |
| Lesotho | 9 |
| Liberia | 2 |
| Libya | 4 |
| Liechtenstein | 2 |
| Macau | 2 |
| Madagascar | 2 |
| Malawi | 78 |
| Malaysia | 101 |
| Maldive Islands | 2 |
| Mali | 1 |
| Mauritania | 2 |
| Mexico | 102 |
| Monaco | 220 |
| Mongolia | 1 |
| Montserrat | 296 |
| Morocco | 51 |
| Mozambique | 3 |
| Namibia | 23 |
| Mauru | 1 |
| Nepal | 14 |
| Netherlands Antilles | 6 |
| New Caledonia | 1 |
| New Zealand | 31,308 |
| Nicaragua | 2 |
| Nigeria | 206 |
| Norfolk Island | 14 |
| Oman | 25 |
| Pakistan | 6,975 |
| Panama | 6 |
| Papua New Guinea | 21 |
| Paraguay | 4 |
| Peru | 51 |
| Poland | 2,312 |
| Qatar | 8 |
| Romania | 15 |
| Rwanda | 1 |
| St. Helena and Dependencies | 50 |
| St. Kitts-Nevis | 405 |
| St. Lucia | 746 |
| St. Vincent | 436 |
| San Marina | 2 |
| Saudi Arabia | 63 |
| Senegal | 10 |
| Seychelles | 43 |
| Sierra Leone | 57 |
| Singapore | 103 |
| Solomon Islands | 8 |
| Somalia | 61 |
| South Africa | 32,491 |
| South Korea | 4 |
| Sri Lanka | 182 |
| Sudan | 6 |
| Swaziland | 80 |
| Syria | 5 |
| Taiwan | 8 |
| Tanzania | 26 |
| Thailand | 128 |
| Togo | 4 |
| Tonga | 3 |
| Trinidad and Tobago | 419 |
| Tunisia | 13 |
| Turks & Caicos Islands | 9 |
| Tuvalu | 2 |
| Uganda | 16 |
| United Arab Emirates | 90 |
| Uruguay | 17 |
| Vanuatu (New Hebrides) | 3 |
| Vatican City | 1 |
| Venezula | 43 |
| Virgin Islands, British | 31 |
| Western Samoa | 13 |
| Yemen Arab Republic | 1,692 |
| Zaire | 4 |
| Zambia | 185 |
| Zimbabwe | 5,069 |

*Table B:*
*Number of retirement pensioners and widows benefit beneficiaries in overseas countries where annual pension increases are paid*

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Alderney | 457 |
| Austria | 3,311 |
| Barbados[1] | 1,585 |
| Belgium | 4,298 |
| Bermuda | 373 |
| Cyprus | 4,103 |
| Denmark | 488 |
| Finland | 100 |
| France (including Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion Island) | 9,081 |
| Germany | 17,693 |
| Gibraltar | 461 |
| Greece | 1,262 |
| Guernsey | 5,134 |
| Iceland | 33 |
| Irish Republic | 66,196 |

| | Number |
|---|---|
| Israel | 2,772 |
| Italy | 15,263 |
| Jamaica | 16,388 |
| Jersey | 7,137 |
| Luxembourg | 94 |
| Malta | 1,988 |
| Mauritius | 187 |
| Netherlands | 3,778 |
| Norway | 297 |
| Philippines | 129 |
| Portugal (including Madeira) | 2,581 |
| Sark | 85 |
| Spain (including the Balearic and Canary Islands) | 23,979 |
| Sweden | 276 |
| Switzerland | 2,253 |
| Turkey | 355 |
| United States of America | 67,630 |
| Yugoslavia | 927 |

[1] Increases will be paid from April 1992.

## Unemployment Benefit (Disqualifications)

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of unemployment benefit claims were disqualified under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 in each quarter since 1980; and what proportion of disqualified claimants were receiving supplementary benefit and income support in each half-yearly survey of unemployed claimants over the same period.

**Mr. Burt:** The information requested is in the tables.

*Table 1*
*Percentage of claims to unemployment benefit disqualified by adjudication officers 1980-91*

| Quarter | Percentage disqualified by adjudication officer |
|---|---|
| 1980 | |
| Q1 | 23 |
| Q2 | 16 |
| Q3 | 17 |
| Q4 | 21 |
| 1981 | |
| Q1 | 20 |
| Q2 | 19 |
| Q3 | 15 |
| Q4 | 19 |
| 1982 | |
| Q1 | 19 |
| Q2 | 18 |
| Q3 | 16 |
| Q4 | 21 |
| 1983 | |
| Q1 | 21 |
| Q2 | 19 |
| Q3 | 16 |
| Q4 | 21 |
| 1984 | |
| Q1 | 22 |
| Q2 | 19 |
| Q3 | 14 |
| Q4 | 19 |
| 1985 | |
| Q1 | 23 |
| Q2 | 19 |
| Q3 | 14 |
| Q4 | 22 |
| 1986 | |
| Q1 | 21 |
| Q2 | 20 |
| Q3 | 17 |
| Q4 | 25 |
| 1987 | |
| H1 | 23 |
| H2 | 22 |
| 1988 | |
| H1 | 24 |
| H2 | 19 |
| 1989 | |
| Q1 | 21 |
| Q2 | 21 |
| Q3 | 15 |
| Q4 | 18 |
| 1990 | |
| Q1 | 19 |
| Q2 | 21 |
| Q3 | 16 |
| Q4 | 19 |
| 1991 | |
| Q1 | 18 |
| Q2 | 23 |
| Q3 | 18 |
| Q4 | 23 |

*Source:* Departmental statistics.
*Sample:* 100 per cent.
*Notes:* 1. Numbers of disqualifications are based on quarter years derived from three calendar months, while numbers of claims are derived from whole weeks.
2. In any particular quarter year a number of the disqualifications could relate to a claim made in a previous quarter.
3. For the duration of 1987 and 1988 statistics were produced half yearly rather than quarterly.

*Table 2*
*Percentage of disqualified claimants in receipt of Supplementary Allowance/Income Support 1980-91*

| | Percentage in receipt of Supplementary Allowance/ Income Support |
|---|---|
| May 1980 | 46·0 |
| November 1980 | 50·1 |
| May 1981 | — |
| November 1981 | — |
| February 1982 | 41·2 |
| May 1982 | 43·5 |
| November 1982 | 44·7 |
| May 1983 | 62·4 |
| November 1983 | 61·1 |
| May 1984 | — |
| November 1984 | 65·0 |
| May 1985 | 61·8 |
| November 1985 | 60·8 |
| May 1986 | 61·4 |
| November 1986 | 58·6 |
| May 1987 | 67·3 |
| November 1987 | 67·9 |
| May 1988 | 69·6 |
| November 1988 | 71·0 |
| May 1989 | 76·8 |
| November 1989 | 77·0 |
| May 1990 | 79·4 |
| November 1990 | 77·6 |

| | Percentage in receipt of Supplementary Allowance/ Income Support |
|---|---|
| May 1991 | 79·6 |
| November 1991 | 78·0 |

*Source:* Half Yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimant. Sample size: 5 per cent.

*Notes:*

1. The numbers of disqualified claimants used in this calculation include a small number of disallowed claims. The available statistics do not provide separate figures for these claims.
2. Figures for May 1981 and November 1981, and May 1984 are not available due to industrial action. Figures are available for February 1982, however, and these have been given above.
3. Income Support replaced Supplementary Allowance from April 1988.

### Maxwell Pensions

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail each item of the funds so far received by the unit set up within his Department to repossess assets belonging to the Maxwell pension funds.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The special unit announced on 8 June is now established. Further details of its work will be given shortly.

**Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review his commitment to the Maxwell pensioners.

**Miss Widdecombe:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State remains committed to the positive measures he announced on 8 June which are intended to ease the exceptional short-term pressures on some Maxwell pension schemes and their pensioners while frozen assets are being released and progress is made in restoring and obtaining other funds. The Department keeps in close touch with trustees of Maxwell pension funds and others concerned with these pension schemes.

## SCOTLAND

### Haddington Sheriff Court

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the suitability of the present accommodation at Haddington sheriff court; and if he will consider acquiring Tenterfield house from Lothian regional council to provide a new location for the court.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to improve facilities at Haddington sheriff court. Courtroom accommodation is now fully adequate to meet the current workload of the court. However, there are still some shortcomings in the provision for witness and other ancillary accommodation, and further improvements at the courthouse are in hand.

The Government do not propose to acquire Tenterfield house or any other alternative location for the courthouse at this stage. The position at Haddington as at all other courthouses will, however, be kept under review.

### Teachers (Stress)

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many teachers, upon leaving the profession, have cited stress as a reason; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of the number of teachers who have retired early, over the last five years, due to stress related illness.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The information sought is not available.

### Disabled Employees

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the total work force in his Department is registered as disabled; what steps he is taking to encourage the employment of disabled people within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** A total of 1·3 per cent. of the work force of the Scottish Office are registered disabled persons. The work force includes, in addition, an unrecorded number of staff who have chosen not to register.

The Scottish Office policy is positively to encourage people with disabilities to apply for posts. A number of initiatives have been taken to ensure that disabled people are aware of vacancies and ensure that the Scottish Office is an equal opportunities employer.

These initiatives make use of the fact that the Scottish Office set up its own recruitment unit in 1990, and include the issue of recruitment literature and application forms to disablement resettlement officers in advance of press advertisements, and discrimination in favour of disabled people where possible under the code of practice published by the Cabinet Office. Recruitment literature bears the employment services disability symbol and states clearly that the Scottish Office is an equal opportunities employer. These initiatives have led to the employment of 25 disabled people in the past two years—4·2 per cent. of the total number of staff recruited in that period.

It is the Scottish Office's intention to continue to make every effort to encourage people with disabilities to seek employment in its ranks, and to this end it has just completed a revision of its recruitment literature, making it more user-friendly to disabled people and giving even greater prominence to its commitment to employ them.

### Land Registration

**Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to extend registration of title under the Land Registration (Scotland) Act 1979 to further areas of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lang:** The former Minister for Home Affairs at the Scottish Office made an order on 14 March 1992 making the county of Clackmannan an operational area for the registration of title in the land register of Scotland with effect from 1 October 1992. This is the first stage in the implementation of a revised programme proposed by the keeper of the registers to extend the land register to cover the remaining counties of Scotland, to which I recently gave my approval. The progressive extension of land registration will bring the benefits of guaranteed title and quicker and streamlined conveyancing practices to the whole of Scotland.

The counties of Renfrew, Dumbarton, Lanark and the Barony and Regality of Glasgow are already in the land register. The timetable for the remaining counties is as follows.

| *County* | *Operational date* |
|---|---|
| Stirling | 1 April 1993 |
| West Lothian | 1 October 1993 |
| Fife | 1 April 1995 |
| Aberdeen<br>Kincardine | 1 April 1996 |
| Ayr<br>Dumfries | 1 April 1997 |
| Angus<br>Perth<br>Kinross | 1 April 1998 |
| Midlothian | 1 April 2000 |
| Argyll<br>Berwick<br>Bute<br>East Lothian<br>Kircudbright<br>Peebles<br>Roxburgh<br>Selkirk<br>Wigtown | 1 April 2002 |
| Banff<br>Caithness<br>Inverness<br>Moray<br>Nairn<br>Orkney and Zetland<br>Ross and Cromarty<br>Sutherland | 1 April 2003 |

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Tourism

11. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tourists he estimates will visit the Province in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

16. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the value of tourism in 1992.

**Mr. Atkins:** Figures are not available for 1992, but the value of tourism in 1991 was £216·6 million, comprising £162 million from visitors from outside Northern Ireland and £54·6 million domestic. The Northern Ireland tourism board is estimating this year a 5 to 10 per cent. increase on the 1991 figure of 1·18 million visitors to Northern Ireland.

### Roads

12. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the proposed new road junction scheme at Forster Green hospital has been removed from this year's roads programme; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** It has been necessary to postpone the start of this scheme until the 1995-96 financial year due to pressures upon available funds.

### Cross-border Co-operation

13. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next expects to meet the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland to discuss cross-border co-operation.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The timing of my next meeting with Mr. Andrews will depend on the progress of the political talks. There continues to be a good deal of contact between Northern Ireland Ministers and officials and their Irish counterparts across a wide range of issues of mutual concern.

18. **Mr. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security co-operation.

**Mr. Mates:** Cross-border security is a constant topic of discussion at Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conferences. At the conference of 27 April both Governments reaffirmed their determination to enhance and strengthen security co-operation.

### Sewage Treatment Works

14. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to prohibit the erection of dwellings within a specified distance of a sewage treatment works.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland as planning authority, has guidelines for dealing with planning applications for proposed housing developments within specified distances of sewage treatment works and for proposed new sewage treatment works or extensions to existing works adjacent to other existing developments. There are no plans to amend these guidelines.

### National Music Day

15. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what support his Department is giving to National Music Day.

**Mr. Hanley:** The hon. Gentleman will know that National Music Day is intended to be self-financing. The Department of Education has therefore not been directly involved, but the Arts Council of Northern Ireland issued publicity material to district councils, to promote National Music Day and there will be a number of events throughout the Province.

### Constitutional Talks

17. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of his talks with the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland.

19. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current state of the inter-party talks on Northern Ireland.

22. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the inter-party constitutional talks.

23. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in the inter-party talks; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about his discussions with political parties about the future of the constitutional position of Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith).

### Community Relations

20. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many district councils for Northern Ireland have introduced policies for promoting community relations.

**Mr. Hanley:** Twenty-two out of 26 district councils have now introduced policies and programmes on a cross-political basis aimed at improving community relations.

### Planning Applications

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received over the granting of planning applications.

**Mr. Atkins:** As there are 16,000 applications granted each year and a significant number of representations are received in relation to applications, the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Schools (Academic Selection)

24. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of schools in Northern Ireland base entry upon academic selection.

**Mr. Hanley:** Six per cent. overall. No primary schools base entry upon academic selection, but 30 per cent. of the schools which provide secondary education base entry on a pupil's ability as indicated by the grade obtained in the transfer procedure tests.

### Common Agriculture Policy

25. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the impact upon Northern Ireland of the reform of the common agricultural policy.

**Mr. Hanley:** Reform of the common agriculture policy is expected to have a favourable impact on Northern Ireland.

### Making Belfast Work

26. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made with Making Belfast Work since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** Under Making Belfast Work job creation, enterprise development and improving residents' ability to compete effectively for employment opportunities have been identified as priorities, but the programme also addresses poor educational achievement and the quality of life in terms of the social and physical environment. There are encouraging signs of progress in all these functional areas.

### Overseas Investment

27. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the measures he is taking to encourage overseas investment into Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Atkins:** Our efforts will continue to be concentrated on those markets which offer the best chances of attracting mobile investment, with a geographical emphasis on Asia Pacific, North America and continental Europe. We will, in particular, seek opportunities in sectors such as information technology, medical technology and automotive components but we will also respond positively to any inward investment opportunities outside those sectors.

### RUC Stations

**Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals the Government have to compensate persons whose amenities are affected by security measures at Royal Ulster Constabulary stations.

**Mr. Mates:** There is provision for compensation in the Land Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1982, the Land Acquisition and Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. No further proposals are planned.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

### Property Development Schemes

**Sir James Spicer:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, (1) which property development schemes identified in the 1990 report and accounts do not yet have planning consent; and what is the total value of the commissioners' investment in these schemes;

(2) how much the commissioners have invested in property development schemes being undertaken in partnership with other developers which have not yet received planning consent; and if he will list such schemes.

**Mr. Michael Alison:** In answer to the first question, there are two such schemes; Ashford Great Park, Kent and Easton lane, Winnall, near Winchester, which are together valued in the commissioners' books at £17·25 million, or 1·67 per cent., of their total property portfolio, without planning permission.

In answer to the second question, Ashford Great Park is the only such scheme. The commissioners have a current equity stake of £30 million and have supported the partnership with loan finance.

## EMPLOYMENT

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by her Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** There are no bilateral or multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by

the Employment Department or a body acting on behalf of the Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

### Training

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently on waiting lists for youth training and how many were on waiting lists six, 12 and 18 months ago in *(a)* North Yorkshire and *(b)* York.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her latest estimate of the average annual cost of each Government-funded training place on training schemes.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The average annual cost to the Government of a place on the two major training programmes in 1991-92 is estimated to have been £2,700 for youth training including credits and £5,900 for employment training.

### International Labour Conference

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has for publishing the White Paper on the instruments adopted at the 78th session of the International Labour Conference 1991.

**Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** I have today published the White Paper entitled, "International Labour Conference".

## WALES

### Local Government Finance

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications have been made under section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to each local authority in Wales; what proportion of the applications have been successful; and what total figure for each local authority has been reduced or remitted.

**Mr. David Hunt:** This information is not collected centrally. The granting of relief is a matter for individual local authorities. Welsh local authorities granted a total of £1,937 relief under section 49 in 1990-91.

### Forestry

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new policies he intends to introduce on forestry management in Wales following the agreement of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on joint principles to protect the world's forests.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The guiding objective of the UNCED statement of principles on forests is

"to contribute to the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests and to provide for their multiple and complementary functions and uses."

We are satisfied that forest management practices in Wales meet with this objective.

### Toxic Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the criteria to be adopted to guarantee environmentally sound management of hazardous and toxic wastes exported to and from EC member states under the revised draft EC regulation COM (92) 121, insofar as it would affect Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Under the current draft of the EC Waste Shipments Regulation, all shipments of waste would have to be destined for a facility authorised by the importing country. The Secretary of State considers that the environmentally sound management of waste would continue to be secured by the existing domestic statutory requirements, including licensing conditions, applying to the facility in question. The competent authority concerned would be able to object to shipments which would lead to a breach of such controls.

### Abandoned Workings

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to conduct a survey of the pollution caused by abandoned mine workings and industrial plants in South Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The National Rivers Authority is already undertaking studies to establish the extent of watercourses affected by overflows from abandoned mines throughout England and Wales. Emissions from industrial plants are monitored by the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local authorities as part of their day-to-day pollution control duties.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if she will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by her Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. David Hunt:** None.

### Hydatidosis

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to Powys health authority following its request for funds for a publicity campaign to alert the public to the dangers of hydatidosis; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Welsh Office has been providing funds to Powys health authority since 1989 for a public education campaign on hydatid disease. Total funding to the end of 1991-92 is estimated at £100,000, and £17,000 has been set aside in 1992-93. Powys health authority have bid for increased resources for 1993-94. This request is being considered as part of the public expenditure round.

### Dragon Advertising

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when a request was first made to his Department by the solicitor acting on behalf of Dragon Advertising for a meeting with his Department's solicitor concerning the

alleged failure of the Welsh Office to pay a sum owing to Dragon Advertising; at what date his Department Office agreed in principle to such a meeting; when it is expected to take place; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** In December 1991, a letter was received from Dragon Advertising's solicitors requesting a discussion, to which the Department agreed in principle, subject to the production of further information by Dragon Advertising. In March 1992, the solicitors representing Dragon Advertising requested a meeting. As a result, correspondence then ensued between the legal group and the solicitors representing Dragon Advertising and a meeting has now been arranged to discuss the matter on Friday 26 June 1992.

## Residential Care

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that opportunities for children in residential care in Wales to share in cooking and catering are not unduly constrained by the terms of the Food Safety Act 1990 or regulations made consequent on that Act.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Guidance issued under the Children Act 1989 (Vol. 4, paragraphs 1.139-1.142) on the operation of residential homes encourages the participation of children in cooking and catering activities in appropriate circumstances.

The Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, as amended, set out the controls necessary for the hygienic preparation of food. Environmental health departments advise on controls bearing in mind the nature of any food safety risk, including the type of food handled and the preparation involved. The person in charge of a home should ensure that all staff and, where appropriate, children in the home are aware of the requirements of the relevant legislation and the procedures to be followed, and that the latter are adopted.

## Elderly People

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish a table showing his best estimate of the numbers of elderly people in Wales as a whole, in each county in Wales and in each district in Wales aged over 85 years who are *(a)* in hospital or other health authority establishments, *(b)* in nursing homes, *(c)* in registered homes for the elderly, *(d)* in unregistered homes for the elderly, *(e)* in sheltered accommodation, *(f)* in other forms of accommodation for elderly people, *(g)* living with relatives and *(h)* living in their own homes;

(2) if he will publish a table showing his best estimate of the numbers of elderly people in Wales as a whole, in each county in Wales and in each district in Wales aged 75 to 85 years who are *(a)* in hospital or other health authority establishments, *(b)* in nursing homes, *(c)* in registered homes for the elderly, *(d)* in unregistered homes for the elderly, *(e)* in sheltered accommodation, *(f)* in other forms of accommodation for elderly people, *(g)* living with relatives and *(h)* living in their own homes;

(3) if he will publish a table showing his best estimate of the numbers of elderly people in Wales as a whole, in each county in Wales and in each district in Wales aged 65 to 75 years who are *(a)* in hospital or other health authority establishments, *(b)* in nursing homes, *(c)* in registered homes for the elderly, *(d)* in unregistered homes for the elderly, *(e)* in sheltered accommodation, *(f)* in other forms of accommodation for elderly people, *(g)* living with relatives and *(h)* living in their own homes.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The numbers of elderly people aged 65-74, 75-84 and 85 and over, living in nursing homes, mental illness hospitals and unit, mental handicap hospitals and units, and registered homes for the elderly are shown in the tables. Information on other forms of accommodation is not held centrally. Data at district level are not readily available.

*Numbers of elderly people in Wales aged 65-74 accommodated in nursing homes, mental illness hospitals and units, mental handicap hospitals and units and residential homes for the elderly, as at 31 March 1991*

| | *Nursing homes* | *Mental illness hospitals and units* | *Mental handicap hospitals and units* | *Registered homes for the elderly* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 231 | 65 | 4 | 297 |
| Dyfed | 152 | 56 | 1 | 239 |
| Gwent | 198 | 120 | 25 | 157 |
| Gwynedd | 215 | 14 | 29 | 143 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 67 | 173 | 43 | 253 |
| Powys | 28 | 43 | 21 | 96 |
| South Glamorgan | 93 | 98 | 23 | 178 |
| West Glamorgan | 231 | 61 | 5 | 98 |
| Wales | 1,215 | 630 | 151 | 1,461 |

*Numbers of elderly people in Wales aged 75-84 accommodated in nursing homes, mental illness hospitals and units, mental handicap hospitals and units and residential homes for the elderly, as at 31 March 1991*

| | *Nursing homes* | *Mental illness hospitals and units* | *Mental handicap hospitals and units* | *Registered homes for the elderly* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 699 | 57 | 7 | 1,121 |
| Dyfed | 323 | 87 | 1 | 801 |
| Gwent | 606 | 152 | 11 | 519 |
| Gwynedd | 304 | 21 | 23 | 671 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 146 | 238 | 15 | 812 |
| Powys | 104 | 59 | 13 | 273 |
| South Glamorgan | 275 | 140 | 17 | 776 |
| West Glamorgan | 717 | 103 | 3 | 420 |
| Wales | 3,174 | 857 | 90 | 5,393 |

*Numbers of elderly people in Wales aged 85 and over accommodated in nursing homes, mental illness hospitals and units, mental handicap hospitals and units and residential homes for the elderly, as at 31 March 1991*

| | Nursing homes | Mental illness hospitals and units | Mental handicap hospitals and units | Registered homes for the elderly |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 847 | 21 | — | 1,338 |
| Dyfed | 298 | 42 | — | 844 |
| Gwent | 562 | 95 | 8 | 582 |
| Gwynedd | 156 | 15 | 4 | 935 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 143 | 109 | 1 | 891 |
| Powys | 97 | 47 | — | 296 |
| South Glamorgan | 304 | 57 | 4 | 1,095 |
| West Glamorgan | 742 | 57 | 2 | 483 |
| Wales | 3,149 | 443 | 19 | 6,464 |

## Environmentally Sensitive Areas

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to make an announcement concerning the establishment of new environmentally sensitive areas in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) on 22 June 1992.

## Bristol Channel (Dredging)

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the corporation's prospecting licence for sand in the Bristol channel deeps.

**Mr. David Hunt:** None.

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his licensing policy on sand and aggregate extraction by dredging in the Bristol channel *(a)* inshore and *(b)* in the deeps; what consultations he has had with the local authorities on revising the licensing policy; and what representations he has received from the building industry in the region concerning the impact on costs of such policy alterations.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Government policy is set out in "Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6 1989: Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England and Wales". Marine dredged sand and gravel has a very important role to play in maintaining supplies of aggregates. It reduces the pressure to work land of agricultural or environmental value and dredging should be encouraged wherever this is possible without introducing a risk of coast erosion or unacceptable damage to sea fisheries and the marine environment.

There will be a review of the arrangements for marine dredged minerals and there will be public consultation on that later this year.

## Cardiff Bay Training Centre

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evaluation he has made of the proposed development by the Cardiff Bay development corporation of a training centre of excellence at Cardiff bay; and what expenditure he has allocated to its adaptation.

**Mr. David Hunt:** None. I have received no request from Cardiff Bay Development Corporation for funding of the proposed training centre in Cardiff bay.

## Traffic Calming

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the funding of pilot schemes for traffic-calming package measures in mixed residential/light commercial areas; if he will make ring-fenced funding available for small-scale or experimental area traffic-calming measures involving capital expenditure below £5 million; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** We have received a number of representations about the funding of traffic calming measures. Local authority associations in Wales have strongly resisted earmarking funds for specific purposes because it would reduce unhypothecated provision and authorities' discretion to determine their own expenditure priorities.

## Cycling

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make special funding provision available to county councils for the establishment of cycle ways, paths or cycle priority schemes in urban areas.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** No. Decisions on allocating resources for the establishment of cycle ways, paths or cycle priority schemes in urban areas are for individual highway authorities.

## Dead Animals (Dumping)

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the nature and extent of the problem of the illegal dumping of dead animals in the countryside and the measures he is taking to deal with it.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The state veterinary service continues to monitor the reports of dumped carcasses, but there is no conclusive evidence that large numbers of animals are being left unburied. The Government have taken a number of steps, including the provision of free advice to farmers on alternative and safe methods of disposal for those who do not wish to use the services of the knacker industry.

## Abattoirs

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many abattoirs in Wales meet EC export standards; and how far each market in Wales is from its closest abattoir.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Three abattoirs in Wales have been licensed as meeting current EC structural and hygiene

standards. Directive 91/497/EC introduces common health rules for all slaughterhouses but these do not come into effect until 1 January 1993.

I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the other details requested.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Members' Transport Allowances

**Sir Keith Speed:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the total amount spent on rail transport and car allowance, respectively, for right hon. and hon. Members in the last financial year.

**Mr. Newton:** The expenditure from the House of Commons: Members' salaries etc. vote for rail travel and motor mileage allowance for hon. Members in 1991-92 was as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Rail transport | 901,117 |
| Motor mileage allowance | 5,679,384 |

These figures exclude the expenditure arising from rail and car travel undertaken by the spouses, children and staff of Members.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Sellafield

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has received, and what action he has taken, following the discovery of radioactively contaminated hydroidorganisms on the beaches near Sellafield.

**Mr. Curry:** Ministry inspectors have received regular reports from British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) during their investigation of the recent incident. It is probable that a damaged diffuser mechanism at the end of the sea discharge pipeline led to hydroids being washed into the pipeline and exposed to liquid radioactive waste before being dislodged and deposited on to the beach. The damaged diffuser has been replaced.

I have asked my officials to ensure that BNFL takes steps to avoid a recurrence of this sort of incident.

### Dog Food

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidelines his Department has issued regarding the feeding of uncooked offal and meat to hunt hounds.

**Mr. Soames:** The Department has issued no guidelines specifically to hunt kennels. Guidance has been issued from time to time by various authorities on the control of dog tapeworms, advising dog owners generally about the need to cook meat and offal before feeding.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to make it an offence to feed uncooked meat and offal to dogs.

**Mr. Soames:** There are no such plans.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in 1990, 1991 and 1992 his Department has met representatives of the Masters of Foxhounds Association; and if they discussed the problems associated with feeding uncooked offal and meat to hunt hounds.

**Mr. Soames:** The Department has met representatives of the Master of Foxhounds Association on several occasions since the beginning of 1990 to discuss the disposal of fallen livestock generally.

### Salmonella

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the steps that are currently being taken to eradicate the cause of salmonella disease; what measures are being adopted to warn and protect consumers; and what information he has on the number of individuals who have been infected by the salmonella virus over the past year.

**Mr. Soames:** The Ministry has a comprehensive set of measures to control salmonella throughout the production chain. These measures include the testing of animal feedingstuffs and raw materials, poultry laying flocks, breeding flocks and hatcheries for the presence of salmonella and the compulsory slaughter with compensation of flocks found to be infected upon investigation.

Risks from salmonella-related food poisoning can be greatly reduced by following good hygiene, preparation and cooking practices. The Government have produced a range of widely distributed public information material on microbiological food safety containing advice on the safe storage, handling, preparation and cooking of food. In addition, the Chief Medical Officer has issued specific advice on eggs.

There were 27,693 isolations of salmonella from humans in England and Wales confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Service Division of Enteric Pathogens in 1991.

### Rabies

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on 16 June, *Official Report*, columns *455-56*, if he will publish the veterinary advice on the effectiveness of vaccination and blood tests for rabies prevention for cats and dogs being imported for breeding purposes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** Effective vaccination confirmed by a blood test offers protection equivalent to quarantine against the introduction of rabies, so long as this is within the framework of strict control arrangements. My answer to the hon. Member for Richmond made clear that the veterinary advice is that these conditions are met in the agreement for commercially traded cats and dogs reached by the Council of Ministers on 15 June.

### Set-aside Schemes

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the management of permanent, non-rotational and rotational set-aside.

**Mr. Curry:** Management conditions for set-aside land will be published as soon as possible after the relevant

Commission implementing regulations have been adopted. We intend to keep our requirements as simple and flexible as possible in the first year.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to have a consultation period for all interested parties prior to fixing the management regimes for the newly announced set-aside schemes.

**Mr. Curry:** The management regime cannot be fixed until after the Commission implementing regulations have been adopted. This will leave farmers very little time indeed to make preparations to set land aside this autumn. In the circumstances our first priority must be to publish firm details of the management conditions as soon as possible and I am afraid this will rule out a formal consultation exercise. We do, however, keep in contact with the industry and environmental organisations and will take their views into account when drawing up the management conditions.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Curry:** I refer you to the reply given on 24 June by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd).

### Hydatid Disease

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies have been undertaken into the possible connection between the disposal of fallen stock and the spread of hydatid disease among animals and humans; and what conclusions have been reached.

**Mr. Soames:** It is known that dogs and wild carnivores excrete eggs of the tapeworm which when ingested by livestock, particularly sheep, develop into the cysts which cause hydatid disease. Dogs become infected with the tapeworm when they eat hydatid cysts present in the carcases of dead animals. Humans may become infected by contact with dogs. Successful control of the parasite (tapeworm) requires regular treatment of dogs with an appropriate medicant.

### Bee Diseases

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the technical informationn on bee diseases supplied by S. L. Kidman, honorary secretary of the Cheshire Beekeepers' Association, in relation to bee diseases.

**Mr. Curry:** I received from the hon. Member on 17 June, a letter from Mr. Kidman commenting on possible chemical treatments for varroa in bees. This is receiving attention and I shall be replying shortly.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 2 June, *Official Report*, column *424*, for which veterinary medicines approval is being expedited for the control of varroasis.

**Mr. Soames:** A licence application for a product containing flumethrin has been received and is currently being assessed against the Medicines Act criteria of safety, quality and efficacy.

### Dead Animals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the nature and extent of the problem of the illegal dumping of dead animals in the countryside and the measures he is taking to deal with it.

**Mr. Soames:** The State Veterinary Service has been monitoring the situation closely and their recent reports indicate that although there are a few incidents of dumping it is not a widespread or persistent problem. However, whenever it does happen the service acts closely with local authorities to try to ensure that offenders are prosecuted. Moreover, legislation is being drawn up to implement the EC Directive on the disposal of animal waste (90/67 EEC) which will have the effect of increasing the penalties for the dumping of carcases.

### Abattoirs

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many abattoirs in England meet EC export standards; and how far each market in England is from its closest abattoir.

**Mr. Soames:** At present 54 abattoirs in England are approved for export to other EC member states; a list is available in the Library of the House. The proximity of markets to abattoirs varies, but the latter are spread throughout the country.

### Eggs

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress is being made in the United Kingdom implementing Directive 89/437/EEC on egg products.

**Mr. Soames:** Regulations will be introduced to implement the requirements of Directive 89/437/EEC on hygiene standards for egg products, replacing the present Liquid Egg (Pasteurisation) Regulations 1963. A consultation paper will be issued beforehand.

Additional conditions applied to eggs from salmonella infected poultry flocks, introduced by MAFF earlier, are being withdrawn as they are outside the scope of the directive. However, the new regulations will include effective provisions relating to the handling and storage of eggs and the testing of egg products.

### Farmers (Incentive Payments)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish figures showing the increase in the level of incentive payments granted to farmers since 1976 in real terms.

**Mr. Curry:** All farmers benefit directly or indirectly from expenditure on agricultural support in the United Kingdom. This expenditure is in the form of market support measures and other grant and subsidy schemes.

The publication "Agriculture in the UK" reports figures for expenditure on agricultural support measures, and the attached table shows figures from 1976 for spending on market support and other measures.

*Public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies (at constant 1992 prices)*

£ million

| | Market support measures | Other measures | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1976-77 | 557·8 | 673·6 | 1,231·4 |
| 1977-78 | 736·3 | 578·3 | 1,314·6 |
| 1978-79 | 559·6 | 526·4 | 1,416·0 |
| 1979-80 | 854·7 | 685·4 | 1,540·1 |
| 1980-81 | 1,270·1 | 713·3 | 1,983·5 |
| 1981-82 | 1,191·0 | 515·6 | 1,706·6 |
| 1982-83 | 1,802·3 | 548·9 | 2,351·3 |
| 1983-84 | 2,129·2 | 559·6 | 2,688·8 |
| 1984-85 | 2,042·4 | 513·6 | 2,556·0 |
| 1985-86 | 2,594·1 | 457·3 | 3,051·4 |
| 1986-87 | 1,592·2 | 383·7 | 1,975·9 |
| 1987-88 | 1,829·2 | 311·4 | 2,140·6 |
| 1988-89 | 1,431·9 | 277·1 | 1,709·0 |
| 1989-90 | 1,159·8 | 281·4 | 1,441·2 |
| 1990-91 | 1,700·7 | 300·7 | 2,001·4 |
| 1991-92 | 1,735·8 | 350·2 | 2,086·0 |

*Sources:* 1976-77 to 1983-84—Annual Review of Agriculture.
1984-85 to 1991-92—Agriculture in the United Kingdom.

## Contaminated Fish

**Mr. French:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has on the quantity and condition of diseased or contaminated fish that are processed for consumption;

(2) which species of fish are most affected by pollution and contamination in the North sea;

(3) what is his estimate of the tonnage of contaminated fish that are caught each year in the North sea;

(4) what information he has on the uses to which contaminated or diseased fish are put when caught;

(5) what representations he has received regarding the amount of contaminated fish that are caught by North sea fishermen;

(6) what measures he intends to take to reduce the number of contaminated fish caught in the North sea;

(7) what is his estimate of the tonnage of caught fish that are not deemed fit for consumption owing to disease or contamination;

(8) what checks are made to ensure that fish caught in the North sea are fit for consumption.

**Mr. Curry:** I occasionally receive representations on this subject.

The Ministry monitors levels of disease and contamination in fish and the results are published regularly in the aquatic environment monitoring and food surveillance reports, available in the Library of the House. Neither disease prevalence nor contaminant levels in fish being landed in the United Kingdom posed a threat to fish stocks or to human health.

Typical species of fish used for disease and contaminant monitoring are dab and flouder. This is because of their susceptibility to disease and their general distribution in inshore waters. Neither species is of significant commercial value.

The most recent comprehensive survey of the North sea, the 1987 quality status report showed it to be generally in good shape. Problems areas are largely confined to the Wadden sea, which receives 65 per cent. of North sea river-borne contaminants via the Rhine, Meuse and Elbe. Nevertheless, the Government, with other North sea Governments, is taking action to reduce inputs of contaminants. For example, United Kingdom inputs of mercury and cadmium were down 51 per cent. and 61 per cent. respectively in 1985 to 1991.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 26 June 1992*

## ENVIRONMENT

### Non-native Species

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department in promoting the adoption and enforcement of measures to prevent the release into the wild of non-native species of animals, plants and pathogens.

**Mr. Maclean:** Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it illegal to release non-native and certain listed animals into the wild and to plant or cause to grow in the wild certain listed plants. The lists of both animals and plants were extended earlier this year. Part VI of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 introduced new provisions to prevent or minimise environmental damage arising from an escape or release of genetically modified organisms into the environment. Regulations under these provisions will be made shortly.

### River Ver

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department has taken to restore the ecological balance of the River Ver in Hertfordshire.

**Mr. Maclean:** The responsibilities and powers to take action for this purpose rest with the National Rivers Authority. My Department has approved the expenditure required for its proposals.

### Carbon Dioxide

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans were submitted by Her Majesty's Government to the European Commission by 1 April about the United Kingdom's strategy for stabilising its carbon dioxide emissions by 2005.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Government sent the Commission a copy of the Environment White Paper (Cm 1200) when it was published in 1990. This set out the United Kingdom's strategy and a first set of measures to limit $CO_2$ emissions. A further report was sent to the Commission last month, updating the White Paper and the first year report (Cm 1655) in the light of the United Kingdom's revised conditional target for $CO_2$ emissions and further decisions on measures to limit emission including the announcement of the establishment of an energy saving trust. The report has been placed in the Library of the House.

### Waste Shipments

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the reasons why the European Environment Council did not conclude an agreement on the proposed Commission regulation on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community at its meeting on 26 May; and what efforts he intends to make to ensure the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement at an early date;

(2) if he will set out each of the reservations held by Her Majesty's Government on the amended draft EC regulation, COM (92)121 final, on the supervision and control of shipments of waste within, into and out of the European Community.

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Robinson) on 3 June at column *544*. I also refer the hon. Member to my Department's explanatory memorandum on this amended proposal. A copy of the memorandum has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to bring about an immediate reduction of waste importation for illegal disposal; and what action he proposes to prevent importation for illegal disposal in the long term.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* The Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988 make it an offence to import waste in breach of the regulations and allow competent authorities to object to any shipments which might lead to a breach of controls over disposal. The draft EC Waste Shipments Regulation would extend and improve these controls. It includes a requirement for any shipment which contravenes the regulation to be taken back.

If the hon. Member has any information about wastes currently being imported for illegal disposal then I should be glad to receive it.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites within *(a)* England and *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside receive imported toxic waste; and if he will identify the sites and state the level of toxic waste disposed of at each site for the last year in which figures are available.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Some 18 companies in England, including one in west Yorkshire, received imported hazardous waste (as notified under the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988) in the financial year 1991-92. The details are as follows:

| *Company and location* | *Waste disposal authority* | *Quantity (tonnes)* |
|---|---|---|
| Biffa Waste Services Ltd., Bray | Berkshire | 333 |
| Chemical Mfg. and Refining Ltd., Rye | East Sussex | 31 |
| Cleanaway Ltd., Ellesmere Port | Cheshire | 1,178 |
| Collier Industrial Waste Ltd., Trafford Park | Greater Manchester | 6,735 |
| DP Effluent Treatment Ltd., Runcorn | Cheshire | 185 |
| Gelpke and Bate Ltd., Rye | East Sussex | 16 |
| Grosvenor Power Service, Carrington | Greater Manchester | 80 |
| Grundon Waste Ltd., Colnbrook | Buckinghamshire | 927 |
| ICI Chemicals and Polymers, Runcorn | Cheshire | 3,721 |
| Lancashire Tar Distillers, Cadishead | Greater Manchester | 2,047 |
| Lanstar Waste Treatment, Cadishead | Greater Manchester | 9,534 |

| Company and location | Waste disposal authority | Quantity (tonnes) |
|---|---|---|
| Leigh Environmental Ltd., Trafford Park | Greater Manchester | 4,441 |
| Polymeric Treatment Ltd., Walsall | West Midlands | 3,192 |
| Progressive Waste Ltd., Trafford Park | Greater Manchester | 1,867 |
| Rechem (Southampton) Ltd., Fawley | Hampshire | 5,629 |
| Solrec Ltd., Morecambe | Lancashire | 19 |
| Thornton Processing Ltd., Bradford | West Yorkshire | 3 |
| Triton Transformer Services Ltd., Newark | Nottinghamshire | 578 |

## Departmental Policies

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new policies or initiatives he announced in *(a)* his address to the Royal Society of Arts on 28 May and *(b)* his interview with Brian Walden on independent television on 7 June.

**Mr. Howard:** No new initiatives were announced on either occasion.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures he has for the total purchases of each of CFCs, HCFCs, methyl chloroform, halons and carbon tetrachloride by Her Majesty's government for the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** This information is not available.

## Water Companies

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the chairman of OFWAT about the number of service companies in which the water companies have acquired an interest or which they have bought out since privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** The director-general's role is to regulate the activities of the companies appointed as water or sewerage undertakers. He has no statutory powers in relation to any group holding company or any other company within a group. However, under the Water Industry Act 1991 the funds of the core water and sewerage businesses are ring-fenced and must be kept separate from any other activities. This separation is reinforced by section 50 of the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992, which takes effect on 1 July. The director-general will now have a specific duty to ensure that customers' interests are protected as respects any activities outside the core business, in particular by securing that transactions between core and associated companies are undertaken at arm's length. He is in the process of introducing measures to enable him to fulfil this duty.

## Litter

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the prosecutions of local authorities which have been successfully undertaken under the litter code.

**Mr. Maclean:** Information on the number of litter abatement orders obtained is not held centrally. However, the Tidy Britain Group undertakes regular surveys of local authorities to monitor the implementation of part IV of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The latest survey was carried out in March this year. Nine out of 419 authorities surveyed reported that they had been served with a litter abatement order. Forty-six authorities reported that they had been notified of an intention to bring a prosecution under part IV. In most cases litter abatement orders would not be necessary because the litter would have been cleared away before the case came to court.

## Housing Land

**Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the regulations governing the use of derelict land grants and similar financial assistance for reclaiming former mining areas and land liable to subsidence for housing purposes; what involvement his Department has in such projects; and if he will state the criteria that local authorities are required to follow in implementing such schemes.

**Mr. Baldry:** The use of derelict land grant (DLG) is governed by rules based on the provisions of the Derelict Land Act 1982, and guidance issued by Her Majesty's Treasury. Under these rules the Department makes grant available to local authorities, private firms and individuals, and voluntary organisations for the reclamation of derelict land. Local authorities and other persons seeking grant should contact the appropriate regional office of the Department for advice on the availability of grant for particular schemes.

## Local Authorities (Management)

**Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the responses to his Department's consultation paper "Internal Management of Local Authorities in England", and whether he will make a statement.

**Mr. Howard:** I have placed a list of the respondents in the Library of the House and have made copies of the responses available to the Library.

The consultation document produced a number of positive and interested reactions, and confirmed me in the view that there is scope for internal management changes which would make for better and more effective local government. I have today invited the three main local authority associations, the Audit Commission, Dr. Michael Clarke of the Local Government Management Board and Professor George Jones to join a working party chaired by my Department with a remit to:

- Consider the suggestions for improving internal management arrangements in response to the consultation paper;
- consult individual authorities supporting new management models;
- work up detailed options suitable for trial by volunteering authorities, including adequate safeguards to protect minority parties and to secure value for money and propriety; and
- to draw up a list of any changes to primary and secondary legislation which would be needed to enable such experiments to take place.

## Property Services Agency

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to safeguard staff redundancy entitlements in the event of the bankruptcy of a purchaser of a PSA business.

**Mr. Redwood:** In the event of the purchaser's bankruptcy within five years of the sale the Government will make up any shortfall in the redundancy payments due to civil servants who transferred with the business. This will however be subject to total redundancy payments not exceeding the amount individuals would have received had they been made redundant at the point of sale uprated to allow for inflation.

## Departmental Accommodation

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he is spending on the rental of accommodation in London for his Department; and what is the highest rental charge he is paying per square foot for accommodation.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 23 June 1992]:* It is not policy to reveal the open market rents negotiated by Government for its office accommodation as these are commercially confidential. However, the internal charge paid by my Department for its central London offices includes £10,625,159 per annum (exclusive of VAT) as the assessed rent based on open market values. The highest assessed charge per square foot is £19·61.

## Wild Birds

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will declare more special protection areas under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 24 June 1992]:* The Government are firmly committed to an accelerated SPA designation programme. Minsmere-Walberswick in Suffolk was designated on 19 May and four sites were designated in Gwynedd as recently as 10 June. I expect to make further designations soon.

## Local Authority Housing

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of local authority housing tenancies available within *(a)* England and *(b)* Yorkshire and Humberside, annually for the years 1980 to 1991.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* The information derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns is as follows.

*Local authority dwellings either occupied or available for letting at 1 April each year*

*Thousands*

| | *England* | *Yorkshire and Humberside* |
|---|---|---|
| 1980 | 4,667 | 582 |
| 1981 | 4,815 | 588 |
| 1982 | 4,719 | 580 |
| 1983 | 4,576 | 559 |
| 1984 | 4,477 | 550 |
| 1985 | 4,425 | 544 |
| 1986 | 4,356 | 537 |
| 1987 | 4,325 | 531 |
| 1988 | 4,242 | 520 |
| 1989 | 4,098 | 505 |
| 1990 | 3,959 | 485 |
| 1991 | 3,835 | 473 |

*Notes:*

(1) The figures for the years up to 1986 do not include local authority owned dwellings situated outside the authority's own area.

(2) The information up to 1982 also excludes local authority dwellings available for letting.

## Waste Production Sites

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce measures permitting waste regulation authorities to visit waste production sites, within the area of the authority, and examine waste intended for reclamation and take samples for analysis.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Waste regulation authorities have powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to enter premises in their areas where any controlled waste (whether or not it is to be recycled) is kept, treated or deposited, and carry out investigations and to take samples.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available enabling waste regulation authorities to check if the waste production sites within their area have appropriate licences.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:* Waste disposal authorities are the bodies which, under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, are responsible for issuing and enforcing waste disposal licences. Under that Act, these authorities are empowered to enter premises in their area to determine whether or not a waste disposal licence is required in respect of a particular activity; they may also serve a notice to obtain information needed to reach such a determination.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce measures requiring all producers of recyclable waste to inform waste regulatory authorities in that area of production, of the exact chemical composition of waste, certified by an independent, competent chemist;

(2) if he will require all producers of recyclable waste to send a copy of a chemical analysis, and other relevant details, which have been verified by the waste regulation authority for the area of production, to the waste regulation authorities receiving the waste for disposal.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 20 June 1992]:* The Secretary of State has no intention of introducing such measures. Regulation of waste management activities is necessary to avoid pollution of the environment and harm to human health. However, any such regulation must be sensibly designed to minimise burdens on industry and to promote recycling wherever this is consistent with environmental protection objectives.

As part of the duty of care on holders of controlled waste introduced on 1 April, any waste regulation

authority may seek access to records (including descriptions) of waste transferred from producers' premises. Such descriptions must contain sufficient information to enable the waste to be dealt with safely and legally. The inclusion of a full chemical analysis will not always be necessary for this purpose.

### Waste Processing

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to ensure that *(a)* importers of waste, *(b)* producers of recyclable waste, *(c)* carriers of waste and *(d)* those who treat or dispose of waste, notify receiving waste regulation authorities before they begin relevant contract work;

(2) if he will empower receiving waste regulation authorities to halt the disposal, recycling or reclamation of waste when *(a)* importers of waste, *(b)* producers of recyclable waste, *(c)* carriers of waste or *(d)* those who treat or dispose of waste, fail to notify receiving waste regulation authorities before they begin relevant contract work.

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 25 June 1992]:]* The Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides substantially enhanced powers for waste regulation authorities over and above those currently available to waste disposal authorities under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Beyond implementing the provisions of the 1990 Act, the Secretary of State has at present no plans to amend or extend the powers of waste regulation authorities in respect of the disposal, carrying, recycling or reclamation of waste.

Under requirements imposed by the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989, carriers of controlled waste are required to register with the relevant waste regulation authority.

Waste regulation authorities will be able to monitor through their licensing functions activities involving the treatment, keeping, recycling, reclamation and disposal of controlled waste.

Authorities have powers to take action, including requiring the cessation of operations, where such activities are being carried on in a manner likely to cause pollution or harm, or are not in compliance with licence conditions.

With reference to imports of waste, a draft EC regulation on movements of waste would require financial guarantees or insurance to cover failed and illegal consignments, and would introduce provisions to secure the return or disposal of waste in such circumstances.

## EDUCATION

### Outside School Education

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children between the ages and five and 16 receive their education outside school; and what percentage of the total five to 16-year-olds population this figure represents.

**Mr. Forth:** In January 1991, some 6,000 children aged five to 15 were receiving education in England otherwise than at school under arrangements made by local education authorities. This represents less than 0·1 per cent. of the total population aged five to 15.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Forman:** The number and percentage of women in post in each grade requested and the overall number in the Department are as follows:

| | *Number of women in grade* | *Per cent women* |
|---|---|---|
| Grade 1–3 | 0 | 0 |
| Grade 4 | 3 | 33·3 |
| Grade 5 | 25 | 21·9 |
| Grade 6 | 113 | 28·3 |
| Grade 7 | 50 | 28·9 |
| Overall | 1,565 | 55·4 |

The figures include staff in the Teachers Pensions Agency, of which the chief executive (grade 5) is a woman. They also include 386 HMI, of whom the majority together with their support staff will transfer to the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, which is to be constituted as a separate non-ministerial department from 1 September 1992.

### Schools, Calderdale

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he received a copy of the report of the Calderdale education department concerning Ashtree infants school, Mixenden junior school and Stanningley Green junior school; what response he is making to the report; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** We have not seen this report. I understand that it was commissioned by Calderdale education authority and is addressed to the governing bodies of the schools. It is for the governors and Calderdale LEA to decide what, if any, further action needs to be taken in the light of the report's findings.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants have been allocated to support and monitor the operation of grant-maintained schools in England; and how many grant maintained schools existed as at 22 June.

**Mr. Forth:** As of 22 June, there were 73 civil servants working specifically on the support and monitoring of grant-maintained schools. There were 217 grant-maintained schools operating with a further 49 approved.

### Higher Education

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what reports he has received about the drop-out rate of students from higher education in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Forman:** Details of non-completion of higher education courses can be found in "University Mangement Statistics and Performance Indicators in the UK", published last year by the Committee of

Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Universities Funding Council, and "Leaving Rates among First Year Students in English Polytechnics and Colleges", a Department for Education statistical bulletin published earlier this month. The Library has copies of both reports.

The available evidence suggests that completion rates haved remained relatively stable during the 1980s. No particular trend has emerged. International comparisons indicate that the United Kingdom has one of the highest ratios of qualifiers to new entrants in Europe.

### Technology Schools Initiative

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to extend the technology schools initiative; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Patten:** I am delighted to confirm that we will be making a further round of allocations for 1993-94 under the technology schools initiative. We will be inviting capital bids in the circular letter to be issued to local education authorities shortly. Grant maintained schools will be invited to bid later in the summer. The first round of the initiative has proved very popular. We have made allocations to 100 schools to enhance their technology teaching and offer courses with a strong vocational emphasis. We will extend this network in 1993-94 by making further allocations to maintained schools with the potential for excellence in technology. We intend to foster diversity in schools: this round of the initiative will further increase the choices available to pupils and parents.

### Postgraduates (Grants)

**Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will announce the postgraduate bursary and studentship rates payable by his Department for the academic year 1992-93.

**Mr. Forman:** The main maintenance rates under the Department's own postgraduate awards scheme for certain professional and vocational courses in the academic year 1992-93 will be as follows (1991-92 rates are shown in brackets):

| | £ | £ |
|---|---|---|
| *Bursaries* | | |
| London | 3,085 | (2,950) |
| Elsewhere | 2,435 | (2,330) |
| Parental home | 1,840 | (1,760) |
| *Studentships* | | |
| London | 5,195 | (4,970) |
| Elsewhere | 4,130 | (3,950) |
| Parental home | 3,045 | (2,915) |

These represent increases of about 4·5 per cent. on the current year's rates. The relevant supplementary allowances will be increased broadly in line.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his policy with regard to the granting of legal representation in criminal cases where a defendant's liberty is at risk.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** It is for the courts to decide whether to grant criminal legal aid in accordance with the statutory criteria laid down in the Legal Aid Act 1988. One of the factors to be taken into account in determining whether it is in the interests of justice that legal aid for representation be granted is whether the offence is such that, if proved, it is likely that the court would impose a sentence which would deprive the accused of his liberty.

**Mr. Bermingham:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will set out the charges which are classified as less serious charges, susceptible to refusal of legal aid under the new arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 19 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *681*.

### Magistrates Courts

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received about the rate at which magistrates courts are able to deal with poll tax enforcement cases.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I have received a small number of representations from local authorities.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate he has made of the income to be raised from local authorities for fees in relation to community charge under the Magistrates Courts Fees (Amendment) Order 1992.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The current estimate is that fees from local authorities in relation to community charge enforcement proceedings in 1992-93 will yield £5·8 million.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) if he will make a statement on the practice of some justices' clerks of requiring local authorities to pay cash in advance of hearings for fees under the Magistrates Courts Fees (Amendment) Order 1992;

(2) when he plans to issue guidance to justices' clerks and local authorities about the operation of the Magistrates Courts Fees (Amendment) Order 1992.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** It is appropriate for a fee to be charged when the relevant application is made. It is the intention to issue guidelines shortly to justices clerks on this and other points on the 1992 order on which queries have been raised.

## WALES

### Cardiff Bay Barrage

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer on 22 June to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, *Official Report*, column *70*, if he will give the latest estimated outturn cost of the proposed Cardiff bay barrage on the same cash price basis as the £147·7 million estimate had been made.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The latest estimate of the outturn cost of the barrage and related expenditure based on the GDP deflator at market prices dated 10 March 1992 up to 1995-96 and inflation at constant 2·5 per cent. after that, is £167·4 million.

### Fish Protection

**Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the proposed byelaws promoted by the North West and North Wales sea fisheries committee for the protection of salmon and sea trout in north Wales coastal waters.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on 19 June.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Second Hand Goods

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he intends to respond to the representations he has received concerning the EC Directive on Second Hand Goods and the possible imposition of VAT on the sale of second hand goods.

**Mr. Lamont:** The Sixth VAT Directive requires tax to be charged on the full selling price of all goods and services unless otherwise relieved. Although there is no general relief for second hand goods, there are special schemes for certain of these goods including works of art, antiques and collectors' items under which tax is charged only on the seller's margin.

The draft Seventh VAT Directive which requires unanimity for its adoption proposes a harmonised scheme which will in general extend this relief to other second hand goods. The Government have taken into account the representations it has received in establishing its negotiating position. My right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has received representations from both the fine art trade and the Charities Tax Reform Group and is fully aware of their concerns.

Any changes to the United Kingdom's current zero rates would require unanimity for adoption and we cannot therefore have unacceptable changes forced upon us. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General's response to a question from the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 17 June, *Official Report*, columns *539-40*.

### National Economic Development Office

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants were employed in the National Economic Development Office and Council; how many of those have been moved to *(a)* the Department of Trade and Industry and *(b)* elsewhere in the civil service; and how many have been made redundant.

**Mr. Portillo:** At the time of my right hon. Friend's statement on 16 June, the NEDC and NEDO employed 113 staff, including four on secondment to other organisations and five on fixed-term contracts which will end before NEDO is due to close on 31 December. In addition, NEDO staff included two secondees from other organisations, including one civil servant.

Staff on secondment to NEDO will be entitled to return to their parent organisation. As my right hon. Friend explained in his statement, some staff may be offered limited period appointments in the DTI and there may be other opportunities in Government Departments. Those who do not secure employment in the civil service will be eligible for redundancy compensation by analogy with the usual civil service rules. I shall not know how many staff have been made redundant until after NEDO has closed at the end of the year.

### Economic Development

**Mr. Biffen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the relative public expenditure on economic development as between England and Wales over the past 10 years; to what extent this has resulted in a convergence between the two economies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lamont:** A territorial analysis of public expenditure is published as appendix E in the statistical supplement to the autumn statement 1991. Information on territorial gross domestic product is published in an article on regional accounts in the November 1991 issue of *Economic Trends*.

### Public Service Pensions

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes to make in the basis upon which the pensions of former public servants who retired between 1976 and 1979 are paid.

**Mr. Portillo:** I have no proposals for any such changes.

### EC Statutes

**Mr. Burns:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken to consult interested parties on the proposed EC statutes for a European co-operative society, a European Mutual society and a European association and the accompanying directives regarding the involvement of employees.

**Mr. Nelson:** The Treasury has today issued a consultative document on these statutes. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## TRANSPORT

### Helicopters

**Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the list of sites for helicopter landing and taking off facilities in London which has been drawn up for the Department's working group on heliports in the capital.

**Mr. Norris:** It is the task of the working group carrying out the London heliport study to identify possible sites for a heliport to serve central London. The Government will publish the working group's report on such sites when they have been identified and evaluated.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to change the laws relating to helicopter landing sites in gardens; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what conclusions he has reached on how noise from helicopters using temporary landing sites should be controlled; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** In August 1991, as part of the consultation paper, "Control of Aircraft Noise", the Government

requested views on possible legislation to control noise from helicopters taking off and landing at temporary sites (including private gardens). Responses to this paper are currently being carefully considered and the Government's conclusions will be announced in due course.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Norris:** The numbers and percentages of women employed in the Department as at 23 June 1992 are:

| | Women | |
|---|---|---|
| *Grade* | *Number* | *Percentage* |
| 1 | 0 | 0·0 |
| 2 | 0 | 0·0 |
| 3 | 1 | 4·3 |
| 4 | 1 | 5·8 |
| 5 | 8 | 7·4 |
| 6 | 6 | 4·0 |
| 7 | 70 | 9·5 |
| All grades | 7,218 | 46·0 |

The figures relate to all permanent staff and are calculated on a head count basis, i.e. part-timers count as one. Non-industrial equivalent grades and staff in the Departments' Agencies are included.

### Bus Deregulation

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions have been reached by the working group set up to discuss ways of deregulating buses in London; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** The consultative forum had an introductory meeting in May to discuss a work programme. The second meeting has been fixed for July. The purpose of the forum is not to reach conclusions about deregulation, but to provide the Government with a variety of views, which we can take into account in formulating detailed plans for the introduction of deregulation.

### Nuclear Fuel (Transport)

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many nuclear fuel rods have been transported to Dounreay by helicopter from overseas in each year since 1979.

**Mr. Norris:** This information is not available from the Department of Transport.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the current safety regulations concerning the air transport into or from Scotland of *(a)* unirradiated and *(b)* irradiated nuclear fuel.

**Mr. Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the written answer on 22 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *31*.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Unemployment

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if she will list for each travel-to-work area the proportion of total unemployed who had been unemployed for more than 12 months in *(a)* April 1984, *(b)* November 1984, *(c)* April 1990, *(d)* April 1992 and *(e)* May 1992 respectively;

(2) if she will list the proportion of the work force by the narrow definition for each travel-to-work area who had been unemployed for more than 12 months in *(a)* April 1984, *(b)* November 1984, *(c)* April 1990, *(d)* April 1992 and *(e)* May 1992 respectively;

(3) if she will list for each travel-to-work area the proportion of the work force by the broad definition who had been unemployed for more than 12 months in *(a)* April 1984, *(b)* November 1984, *(c)* April 1990, *(d)* April 1992 and *(e)* May 1992 respectively.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Claimant unemployment figures by duration are available only on a quarterly basis, for January, April, July and October of each year. The information available can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Public Information

**Mr. Cann:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now release his Department's files relating to the Shingle street incident in 1940 into the public domain.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I have been in correspondence and discussion with my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), in whose constituency Shingle street is, on this matter. As a result of those discussions, I am reviewing the files held in the Department dealing with the evacuation of the civilian population from several villages on the east coast, including Shingle street, during the second world war with a view to opening them to the public.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 24 June, *Official Report*, columns *208-11*.

### Lorrain Osman

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account he took in his decision on the extradition of Lorrain Osman of *(a)* the jailing of the prosecutor who collected the original evidence, *(b)* the doubts on the credibility of the principal witness, *(c)* the motives of the Malaysian authorities in seeking a prosecution and *(d)* the loss of defence documents.

**Mr. Jack:** The Home Secretary's decision is the subject of legal challenge and the matter is therefore sub judice.

### Roy Meads

**Mr. Geoffrey Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on a review of the case of Roy William Meads, currently serving a prison sentence.

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to reach a decision on this case shortly. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as a decision has been reached.

### Maxwell Brothers

**Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis into the circumstances surrounding the televising of the arrest of the Maxwell brothers to find out who gave the time and place of the arrest to the media.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The Maxwell investigation is being undertaken by the Serious Fraud Office in conjunction with the City of London police. It is the policy of both the Serious Fraud Office and the City of London police that no information about impending arrests and searches should be provided to the media. The policy was followed prior to the arrest of Kevin and Ian Maxwell on 18 June.

Neither the commissioner of the City of London police nor the director of the Serious Fraud Office has any evidence to suggest that unauthorised briefing occurred. Any person having such evidence should make it available to them so that it may be investigated.

### Crime Statistics

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the next bulletin of statistics on recorded crime.

**Mr. Jack:** Home Office Statistical Bulletin 14/92, published on 24 June, contained the figures of notifiable offences recorded by the police in the period April 1991 to March 1992. We expect to publish a bulletin with the figures for the period July 1991 to June 1992 in September.

### Programme Development Visit Grants

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is yet able to announce the successful applicants for Home Office programme development visit grants for local projects dealing with crime and criminal justice.

**Mr. Jack:** I am pleased to announce that £1·8 million over three years has been awarded to 12 projects around the country under a scheme designed to stimulate innovative new local responses to crime problems.

The successful projects selected for funding by the Home Office programme development unit in 1992-93 (budgets subject to final confirmation) are:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Domestic Violence Crisis Intervention Pilot (Islington Safer Cities/Metropolitan Police) | 100,000 |
| Mediation and Employment Project (Community Justice Centre, Cardiff: South Glamorgan Social Services) | 100,000 |
| Women and Violence (Leeds Inter-agency Project) | 90,000 |
| Healthy Alliance for Dorset (School-based multi-agency project: Bournemouth, Poole) | 70,000 |
| Young Children First (High/Scope UK: Lewisham, Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Manchester) | 58,000 |
| Preventing Criminality (Multi-agency: Sheffield) | 55,000 |
| Education, Advice and Counselling for Black Young Men (Lewisham Youth Aid) | 55,000 |
| Mobile Advice and Support Service for Families (Welsh Women's Aid: North Wales) | 38,000 |
| Asian Women, Domestic Violence and Mental Health (Southall Black Sisters) | 34,000 |
| Peer Education Nottingham | 30,000 |
| Support and Advice for Vulnerable Elders (Lewisham Social Services) | 30,000 |
| Youth Education Programme (Keighley Domestic Violence Forum) | 10,000 |

I should like to congratulate the successful applicants and recognise the energy, commitment and high quality that was such a striking feature across the 750 proposals received from all parts of the country. The aim of the programme development unit is to respond to and encourage the excellent ideas that are generated at local level.

We shall be looking very carefully at the progress of these projects so that good ideas whose value is proved can be widely disseminated.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My Department has no bilateral or multilateral agreements with Liechtenstein. The current agreements to which Swiss organisations are also party are as follows:

i. *Participation in International Organisations*
- European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN)
- European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences ('The Vienna Centre')
- European Molecular Biology Conference and Laboratories (EMBC/EMBL)
- European Science Foundation (ESF)
- European Space Agency (ESA)
- European Synchrotron Radiation Facility (ESRF)
- Human Frontier Science Programme (HFSP)
- Institut Laue-Langevin (ILL)
- International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

ii. *Other Multilaterial Programmes and Studies*
- Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS)
- DNA Repair and Cancer programme (under the EC Medical and Health Research Programme)

Effects of atmospheric pollutants (European Top Chamber Project)
European Geograverse (EGT)
European Palaeoclimate (ESF Programme)
Greenland Ice Core Programme (GRIP) (ESF Programme)
Ocean Drilling Programme (ODP) (ESF European Consortium)
Polar North Atlantic Margin (PONAM) (ESF Programme)
Royal Society's European Science Exchange Programme (ESEP)
Studies on myeloid leukaemia and osteosarcoma (under the EC Readiation Protection Programme)
Study of hypoxic cell radiosensitiser RO-03-8799 in the radiotherapy of advanced cervical carcinoma
Western European Geological Surveys (WEGS)

iii. *Bilaterial Collaborations*
Memorandum of Understanding with the Swiss Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (ISAR)
Mesozoic climate change: effects and causes (ETH, Zurich )
Microbiological studies in Jordan to simulate the effects of alkaline groundwater on waste repositories as net analogues of cement (NAGRA, Wettingen)
Study of the ecology and epizootiology of Lyme disease (University of Neuchatel)

iv. *Collaborations with Commercial Organisations*
Analysis of SHT receptor systems in dementia (Sandoz Foundation for Gerontological Research)
Biotechnology (Ciba-Giegy)
Biotechnology (Sandoz)
LINK SPG selective drug delivery and targeting (Ciba-Giegy)
HIV Clinical Trials (Roche)

### Central Office of Information

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what targets have been set for the Central Office of Information in 1992-93.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Central Office of Information has four targets for the 1992-93 financial year. They are:

(i) to break even in current cost terms after covering all costs, including interest on borrowings;
(ii) To achieve a 1 per cent reduction in unit cost of output in real terms, while maintaining suitable levels of quality;
(iii) to deliver all work in accordance with client specification; and
(iv) to deliver all work on time.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### War Disability Pensions

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the cost of *(a)* raising the disregard on war disability pension from £10 to £15 and *(b)* abolishing the disregard on war disability pension.

**Mr. Burt:** The cost of raising the disregard on war disability pension from £10 to £15 across the income-related benefits is estimated to be around £5 million a year. Abolishing the disregard on war disability pension would save around £15 million a year.

*Note:* Modelled using data drawn from the 1987-88-89 Family Expenditure Surveys and the 1990 Annual Statistical Enquiry. Figures are rounded to the nearest £5 million.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on war disability pension and the disregard amount.

**Mr. Burt:** The £10 statutory disregard of war disablement pensions applies across the income-related benefits. Local authorities also have a discretionary power to enhance this disregard at their own expense in calculating entitlement to housing benefit and community charge benefit. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

### Equal Opportunities

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 respectively and overall in his Department are women.

**Mr. Burt:** The information for the Department at 15 April 1992 is in the table.

| *Grade* | *Total* | *Women* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 13 | 4 | 31 |
| 4 | 10 | [1]3 | 30 |
| 5 | 99 | 22 | 22 |
| 6 | 285 | 66 | 23 |
| 7 | 522 | 97 | 19 |
| Others | 81,254 | 55,566 | 68 |
| Total | 82,188 | 55,758 | 68 |

*Notes:*
1. For each grade, all non-industrial staff in equivalent grades are included.
2. Staff of the Department's executive agencies are included.
3. All figures refer to staff in post.

[1] Includes the chief executives of the Contributions Agency and the Child Support Unit.

### Disabled People (Legislation)

**Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the advisory and enforcement agencies, referred to in the letter of 5 June from the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, which oversee the implementation of legislation governing provisions for disabled people; if he will state the terms of reference of each agency; if he will specify the achievements of each agency in the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The principal bodies are in the table. Their terms of reference are publicly available. Ministers may also seek the advice of other bodies including local authorities and other service providers.

A comprehensive list of the achievements of all these bodies in the last 10 years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Many of their reports are in the Library.

*Social Security*
Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board. Reports to the Secretary of State. Established September 1991—Reports will be placed in the Library
Social Security Advisory Committee—Reports of SSAC's work are placed in the Library
Industrial Injuries Advisory Committee—Reports of the IIAC's are placed in the Library
War Pensions Committee—Annual reports are placed in the Library

*Employment*

National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities—Annual reports are placed in the Library
Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities (60 district advisory committees)
Health and Safety Commission and Executive
Disablement Advisory Service
The Sheltered Employment Advisory Group
Training and Enterprise Councils
Industrial Tribunals
Disablement Resettlement Service
Employment Rehabilitation Service

*Education*
Her Majesty's Inspectorate—The Senior Chief Inspector's reports are in the Library

*Health*
Mental Health Review Tribunals
Mental Health Act Commission—Reports are placed in the Library
Advisory Group on Rehabilitation

*Transport*
The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee—Reports are placed in the Library

*Sport*
The Sports Council—Reports are placed in the Library

*Access and Environment*
Building Regulations Advisory Committee
British Standards Institution—Produces Codes of Practice to complement Approved Documents which accompany Building Regulations

*Northern Ireland*
Mental Health Commission
Mental Health review tribunal
Disability Action Access Committee
Northern Ireland Transport Advisory Committee
Committees for the Employment of Disabled People
Northern Ireland Building Advisory Committee

*Scotland*
The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

### Students (Benefits)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received in the current year about restoring benefit entitlement to students during summer vacations.

**Mr. Burt:** We have received a number of representations from hon. Members, some local branches of the National Union of Students and from members of the public. A letter was also received from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

### Invalidity Pension

**Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average waiting time for people on invalidity pension who have had to wait for the upgrading in line with inflation in Scotland; and if he will name the benefit offices with waiting lists of four weeks and over.

**Mr. Scott:** I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency that the information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but that the uprating exercise was completed in the normal way. However, if the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, he may wish to write to the chief executive giving further details.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Ozone-Depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol and HCFCs.

**Mr. Atkin** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments purchasing criteria includes a requirement to seek out and use suitable substitutes. Our policy, in line with the rest of the United Kingdom, is to eliminate the use of these products, if possible, in advance of the date set out in the EC regulation and Montreal protocol. We will consider the use of HCFCs when discussions on their control under the Montreal protocol are completed.

## HEALTH

### Adolescents

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the extent to which preventive psychotherapeutic work with children and young people is likely to reduce the risk of adolescent suicide, violence, drug-taking and severe sexual problems.

**Mr. Yeo:** These risks arise from a large number of often inter-related factors. We are not aware of any clear evidence that preventive psychotherapeutic work is likely to influence the incidence of these risks.

### Child Psychotherapy

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of research on the effect difficulties in childhood cause in adult life; and what assessment she has made of the role of child psychotherapists in this area.

**Mr. Yeo:** There are some links between emotional disturbances in childhood and those occurring in adult life but these are sometimes weak and the relationship between the two is by no means simple. Although the treatment of disorders in children is sometimes claimed to prevent later adult psychiatric disorder, the evidence in support of this claim is not strong.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of children in *(a)* residential and *(b)* day centres for children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or both; what the average cost to maintain each young person is; and what is the cost of psychotherapy for such children.

**Mr. Yeo:** This information is not available centrally.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychotherapy advisers are available to her Department.

**Mr. Yeo:** There is no formally appointed adviser for child psychotherapy corresponding to the Chief Medical

Officer's consultant adviser in child psychiatry. Leading child psychotherapists are consulted as necessary. The Department itself employs a range of professional advisers in the field of mental health, including psychotherapy.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified child psychotherapists are practising in the United Kingdom *(a)* by region, *(b)* by health authority and *(c)* in the inner cities; and how many sessions are worked in each authority.

**Mr. Yeo:** The latest available statistics showing the number of qualified child psychotherapists practising within the national health service in England, by region, and by district health authority are set out in the table. Information about the numbers of staff employed within the inner cities or the number of sessions worked in each health authority is not collected centrally.

*Child Psychotherapists employed in the National Health Service in England, as of 30 September 1991*

| *England* | *WTE*[1] |
|---|---|
| Yorkshire | 39·40 |
| Hull | 2·40 |
| East Yorkshire | 2·00 |
| Grimsby | 2·00 |
| Scunthorpe | 13·00 |
| York | 1·00 |
| Harrogate | 2·00 |
| Calderdale | 6·80 |
| Dewsbury | 7·20 |
| Leeds Western | 1·00 |
| Yorkshire RHA HQ | 2·00 |
| North West Thames | 72·80 |
| North West Hertfordshire | 10·00 |
| Barnet | 0·30 |
| Harrow | 10·00 |
| Hillingdon | 1·00 |
| Riverside | 29·50 |
| Parkside | 22·00 |
| North East Thames | 1·00 |
| Bloomsbury and Islington | 1·00 |
| South West Thames | 27·27 |
| North West Surrey | 3·00 |
| West Surrey and North East Hampshire | 1·90 |
| South West Surrey | 1·20 |
| Mid Surrey | 1·00 |
| Mid Downs | 4·80 |
| Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton | 5·37 |
| Wandsworth | 9·00 |
| Merton | 1·00 |
| Wessex | 3·40 |
| Portsmouth and South East Hampshire | 3·40 |
| West Midlands | 1·00 |
| South Birmingham | 1·00 |
| North Western | 45·33 |
| Lancaster | 2·00 |
| Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre | 9·80 |
| Preston | 5·50 |
| Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley | 1·00 |
| West Lancashire | 1·00 |
| Bolton | 1·00 |
| North Manchester | 12·63 |
| Salford | 3·30 |
| Stockport | 9·10 |
| Trusts | 13·00 |
| St. James Hospital | [2]1·00 |
| North Hertfordshire | [3]0·60 |
| Mount Vernon | [3]1·00 |
| Hillingdon Hospital | [3]7·00 |
| Lifecare | [4]1·00 |
| Manchester Central | [5]2·40 |
| SHAs | 1·00 |
| Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's | 1·00 |
| Total | 204·20 |

[1] Whole Time Equivalents.
[2] Yorkshire Region.
[3] North West Thames Region.
[4] South West Thames Region.
[5] North Western Region.

*Source:* National Health Service Non-Medical Manpower Census: HAP(STATS)B Department of Health.
Categories included in this figure are Child Psychotherapist (Group A), and Child Psychotherapist (Group B).
These figures are provisional.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she will make to meet the psychiatric needs of children living with disturbed family members, who have been released into the community from mental health institutions under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

**Mr. Yeo:** The needs of individuals with psychiatric disturbance, whether or not recently discharged into the community, and of affected family members, including children, are the responsibility of district health authorities and social services departments. It is for these authorities to determine needs and to provide or purchase services accordingly.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service multi-disciplinary teams there are for child mental health based in child and family consultation centres; and how many such teams include a child psychotherapist.

**Mr. Yeo:** The number of multi-disciplinary teams is not known centrally. Each district health authority is responsible for making provision to meet the mental health needs of children in its area, if necessary by purchasing services from another district. Where a local service does not employ a child psychotherapist, psychotherapeutic services may be provided by other members of the multi-disciplinary team such as child psychiatrists or clinical psychologists.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the ability of the current provision of child psychotherapy to meet the demands for treatment of children and their families.

**Mr. Yeo:** Assessment of the need for child psychotherapy services is a matter for health authorities in the planning of district child mental health services. Psychotherapy is only one of a range of treatments which can be offered to children with mental disorders.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the level of

demand for the services of child psychotherapists for teaching, supervision and consultation from other professionals working with children.

**Mr. Yeo:** It is for the other professions involved to determine what contribution to the training and support of their members could usefully be made by child psychotherapists.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children and young people in the United Kingdom have psychological problems or disturbances assessed as requiring treatment from mental health specialists, including child psychotherapists.

**Mr. Yeo:** The overall prevalence of mental health problems in the child and adolescent population is estimated at up to 20 per cent., with 7 to 10 per cent. having moderate to severe problems. Information about the numbers assessed as needing treatment from particular professional groups, is not held centrally.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what function she envisages for child psychotherapists in the implementation of the aims of "Health of the Nation".

**Mr. Yeo:** The White Paper on "The Health of the Nation" is expected to be published shortly. All health professionals will be expected to make an appropriate contribution to achieving its aims.

## Private Nursing Homes

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private nursing home beds are occupied in homes situated in *(a)* Murton, *(b)* Seaham, *(c)* Easington, *(d)* South Hetton, *(e)* Shotton, *(f)* Peterlee, *(g)* Horden and *(h)* Blackhall, respectively; and at what cost to the Exchequer.

**Mr. Yeo:** This information is not collected centrally.

## Electoral Registration

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total numbers of electors registered in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom *(a)* on the current electoral register and *(b)* on the registers in force for each of the years from 1978-79 to 1991-92.

**Mr. Sackville:** The numbers in each parliamentary constituency on the 1992 electoral register were published in OPCS Monitor EL 92/1, and similar figures for earlier years were published in successive annual volumes of Electoral Statistics (Series EL). Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

## Abortion

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will arrange for her Department to receive copies of the annual reports and accounts of companies which provide abortion in private clinics.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department's responsibility is to ensure that the requirements of the Abortion Act 1967 are satisfied and that patients receive an appropriate standard of medical care.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those who have sight of the reports compiled by her Department's inspectors on private clinics which provide abortions.

**Mr. Sackville:** These reports are drawn up as confidential documents because of the information they contain on individual patients, doctors and others concerned with treatment etc. As such they are available only to those in the Department who need to see them in carrying out their duties of administering the 1967 Abortion Act and supporting regulations.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the complication rates associated with individual clinics approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 19 June at col. 706-7.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the gestation and grounds of the seven abortions performed after 28 weeks gestation from 1 April 1991 to 30 September 1991.

**Mr. Sackville:** All of the post 28 week cases were performed under ground E (that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped).

| *Number of weeks gestation* | *Number of abortions* |
|---|---|
| 29 | 4 |
| 30 | 1 |
| 33 | 1 |
| 36 | 1 |

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on procedures approved by other EC Governments for counselling mothers considering abortion.

**Mr. Sackville:** Information is available from some other EC countries about national laws as they apply to abortion but this does not extend to details about any counselling procedures.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will extend the practice of providing information on the condition of the woman and her aborted pre-born child, together with the full statement on the medical condition of the child to those abortions performed on grounds of disability before 24 weeks.

**Mr. Sackville:** A large amount of information on abortion is already provided to the Department and published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. During the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 an assurance was given that further information would be obtained in the special case of abortion after 24 weeks, and this is being done. We have no plans to extend these arrangements.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the sources from which statistics are compiled by her Department on complications following abortion.

**Mr. Sackville:** The statistics published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are derived from the abortion notification forms sent to the Chief Medical Officer.

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make arrangements for her Department to receive the reports of local health authority inspections of private clinics approved under section 1(3) of the Abortion Act 1967.

**Mr. Sackville:** No.

## Drinking Water

**Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the addition of fluoride to drinking water; what advice she provides to members of the public who do not want fluoride in their drinking water; and what effective measures are available to the public for the removal of fluoride from drinking water, and at what cost.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Since 9 April 1992 the Department has received a total of 23 communications relating to the addition of fluoride to drinking water and two parliamentary questions have been asked. The Department believes the fluoridation of water to a level not exceeding one part per million to be a safe and effective means of preventing tooth decay. We do not advise members of the general public on how to extract fluoride from their water supply.

## HIV Infection

**Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions her Department has had with South Birmingham health authority concerning the incident of a HIV positive man infecting a number of women in Birmingham; what proposals her Department intends to bring forward to amend the law to render this type of behaviour a criminal offence; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department is in close touch with South Birmingham health authority about this case and is considering carefully a range of wider issues related to it.

We have asked the health authority to ensure that everything possible is being done to protect the public health and that it is satisfied with the care being offered to all those concerned. We have also emphasised the need to maintain confidentiality.

Questions of criminal law are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We understand, however, that there are difficulties both in principle and in practice with creating an offence of this sort. These are being considered carefully by my right hon. and learned Friend, who will look at the precedents in other countries before reaching a final view.

# DEFENCE

## Accommodation

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much service accommodation is located in *(a)* Lothian and *(b)* Scotland; and how much service accommodation in (i) Lothian and (ii) Scotland is currently empty.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** As at 31 March 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, MoD owned 753 service married quarters in Lothian and 6,567 in Scotland. Of these, 174 were vacant in Lothian and 954 in Scotland. Many of the unoccupied properties were either undergoing major maintenance work or modernisation, some were already allotted to service families who were due to move in shortly and others were being considered for disposal. In addition, 249 properties in Scotland were in the process of being sold, 53 of these were in Lothian.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications from service personnel to purchase his Department's accommodation through the services discount scheme have been received in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Since the introduction on 1 December 1983 the following numbers of applications have been received.

| *Financial year* | *Number of applications* |
|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 10,853 |
| 1985-86 | 16,255 |
| 1986-87 | 29,002 |
| 1987-88 | 51,261 |
| 1988-89 | 81,234 |
| 1989-90 | 78,298 |
| 1990-91 | 35,662 |
| 1991-92 | 22,026 |

Many of these applications are multiple bids from service personnel.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had in the last six months with local authorities about the housing opportunities available to ex-service personnel and their families.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** As part of the process of assembling a database to inform those leaving the services who may wish to seek local authority accommodation, officials of my Department wrote in December 1991 to the housing officers of local authorities seeking information about their policies regarding the housing of ex-service personnel. The results of these enquiries are now held centrally at the joint service housing advice office, Old Sarum, which was set up in May this year to provide advice on a range of housing matters to service personnel. At a local level, regular contact has been maintained, and continues to be maintained, by service units with local authorities on the housing needs of service personnel leaving the service.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have purchased their homes through the services discount scheme in the third quarter of financial year 1991-92.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A total of 102.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total amount of discounts given out by the services discount scheme in each year since its inception.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The amount of discount given out by the services discount scheme since its introduction on 1 December 1983, is as follows:

| Financial year | Discount in £ |
|---|---|
| 1983-84 | Nil |
| 1984-85 | 1,300,415 |
| 1985-86 | 2,427,607 |
| 1986-87 | 4,173,860 |
| 1987-88 | 3,734,206 |
| 1988-89 | 7,299,277 |
| 1989-90 | 8,158,387 |
| 1990-91 | 9,681,730 |
| 1991-92 | 6,942,010 |

## Research Projects

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *256*, what are the reasons behind his Department's policy not to publish the list of Ministry of Defence research projects in universities and polytechnics which are unclassified.

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman knows that it has been our consistent policy not to release details of individual research contracts at universities and other institutions of higher education, but to leave it to the institutions themselves to confirm their involvement.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research projects in universities and polytechnics are currently being funded by the Ministry of Defence; what is their total worth; and how many of these research projects are currently classified secret.

**Mr. Aitken:** The Ministry of Defence is currently funding in universities and other institutions of higher education in Britain 789 research contracts and agreements with a total value of £75·1 million. One is classified secret.

## Chemical and Biological Warfare

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work in the field of chemical and biological warfare the United Kingdom was carried out at the Canadian military establishment at Suffield in Alberta; and what was the nature of this work.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The experimental station Suffield in Alberta was set up in 1941 under an agreement with the Canadian Government to establish a joint United Kingdom-Canadian chemical weapons experimental site. About 10 United Kingdom scientists went to Canada to help set up the new site. By 1946, the station was entirely staffed by Canadians and was taken over by the Canadian Defence Research Board in April 1947 and eventually became the Defence Research Establishment Suffield. During the second world war there was collaboration between the United Kingdom and Canada involving work at Suffield on a retaliatory capability in chemical weapons and biological weapons against the threat that such weapons might be used against the allied forces. Both the United Kingdom and Canada have abandoned all work on offensive chemical and biological warfare and since then both countries have been solely concerned with the provision of effective protective measures for their armed forces against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. Collaboration in chemical and biological defence has continued up to and including the present day under various collaborative arrangements already outlined in my reply of 21 May 1992, *Official Report*, columns *255-56*.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *16*, if he will publish the text or details of the 1980 memorandum of understanding on chemical and biological (CB) defence between the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada; what is the purpose of the agreement; whether the memorandum is still in force; what amendments have been made and for what reasons; and whether the results of research in British universities and polytechnics funded by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment have been passed to other countries under this memorandum.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The memorandum of understanding (MOU) remains in force and is classified. Since it was signed in 1980, there have been four amendments; three to extend the MOU and one to expand its scope. The MOU addresses exchange of information on chemical and biological defence research and development and on production and procurement of chemical and biological defence equipment.

Reports of research in British universities and polytechnics funded by the chemical and biological defence establishment are not routinely passed direct to the United States and Canada, but the results of such work contribute to the science and technology base which is shared with these countries.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *255*, with regard to the United Kingdom—United States—Canada—Australia armies agreement referred to in point *(c)*, when the agreement was signed; in what year the panel on nuclear, biological and chemical defence within the quadrupartite working group started its work; what is the nature of its work; who are the members of the panel; and whether members of the Ministry of Defence visit United States Department of Defence establishments in the course of the workings of this panel.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A Basic Standardisation Agreement (BSA) was agreed between the American, British and Canadian armies in 1954. In 1963 the Australian army joined the programme and all four armies ratified the BSA in 1964. The quadrupartite working group on nuclear biological and chemical (NBC) defence first met in 1978 and its purpose is to identify and recommend to armies how interoperability may be achieved in the field of NBC defence. The five United Kingdom members of the group are drawn from Ministry of Defence branches which are active in NBC defence. The group meets every 18 months on a cyclical basis in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Meetings in the United States are held at department of defense establishments.

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *255*, in what year the sub-group for chemical and biological defence research, referred to in point (f) of the answer, was set up; what is the nature of its work; and when Australia and New Zealand formally joined the programme.

**Mr. Aitken:** The sub-group for chemical and biological defence research, involving the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia, was formed in 1967. Its aim is to guide and co-ordinate exchanges and active collaboration in research and development activities for chemical and biological defence. New Zealand has not actively participated in this sub-group.

## Strategic Defence Initiative

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research developments and contracts and agreements have been awarded to the British Ministry of Defence by the United States strategic defence initiative programme since January 1987; what is their total worth; and if he will list them.

**Mr. Aitken:** Government-to-Government arrangements for US-funded work performed by the United Kingdom for the SDI programme are called letters of offer and acceptance (LOAs). Since the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the two countries in December 1985, 25 such LOAs have been awarded, amounting to a total value of $107·3 million. The majority of the work and funding effort has been sub-contracted to United Kingdom industry.

The purpose of three arrangements is classified; the remainder are as follows:

SUBJECT:
UK SDI European Architecture Study
European BMC3 Architecture
Electromagnetic Railgun
Countermeasures to SDI components
Laser Impulse Coupling/Interaction
European Test Bed Requirements Study
Catalyst for CO2 laser system
Advanced Sensor Hardening
Higher operating temp IR detectors
Delay Lines for use at 10 Micrometers
UK Node Extended Air Defence test bed
Artificial Intelligence Discrimination
Data Fusion Demonstrator
MESAR—Radar Trials
Tetraform
UKAS follow-on study
Lethality Database
Sensor Hardening (follow-on studies)
Phase Conjugation Programme
Target-Oriented Tracking System
Evolution and test of IR window materials
Threat Generation Study

Details of all unclassified awards have been included as some agreed prior to January 1987 will have had additional funding of work packages placed upon them after this date.

## Shellfish Toxins

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what use has been made by his Department of shellfish toxins.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A study on shellfish toxins was carried out in 1982 to establish whether such toxins have any effect on medical counter-measures against nerve agents.

## Genetic Engineering

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *256*, what is the value of the project into genetic engineering which is being sponsored by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

**Mr. Aitken:** This is matter for the chemical and biological defence establishment (CBDE) under its framework document. I have therefore asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

## Capital Sentences

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many requests have been received for review of capital sentences carried out under the British Army Acts between 1914 and 1920 in the latest period for which he has records.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Since 1989, the Ministry of Defence has recieved nine requests for pardons for soldiers executed during the first world war.

## Private A. Beverstein

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Public Record Office the War Office correspondence relating to the case of No. 11/1799 Private A. Beverstein (enlisted as A. Harris) of 11 Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The War Office correspondence relating to this case is already available for inspection at the Public Record Office, primarily in class WO95, piece No. 1856, and in the court-martial file, WO71, piece 456, which was released to the public domain in January of this year.

## Ozone-destroying Chemicals

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state, in tonnes, the total amount of ozone-destroying chemicals used by his Department in 1991; if he will list the military specifications his Department issues which require the use of an ozone-depleting chemical; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Figures for the quantities of ozone-depleting substances used by the Department in 1991 are not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Arrangements have been made to modify MOD standards and specifications to eliminate the requirement to use ozone-depleting substances as alternative substances or means become available.

## Menwith Hill Station

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *17*, for what reasons the military base at Menwith Hill station is linked by cable to the British Telecom Hunterstones tower.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The cables laid between Menwith Hill and the British Telecom relay station at Hunterstones tower did, at one time, carry British and United States defence communications. However, they were replaced a few years ago by a different British Telecom service and are consequently no longer in use.

*[Mr. Clarke]*

There is a Scottish Office circular on interviewing mentally disordered suspects but it is a long way short of the more rigorous English Code of Practice under PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act).

Because of time constraints and the inadequacy of legal aid, defence lawyers may not pick up the fact that a person has a mental handicap."

Clearly we are dispensing with the law in that case, to the detriment of vulnerable people who face those difficulties. I know that the Minister does not have specific responsibility for Scotland, but Scotland has that problem. He may wish to take that on board and discuss it with his colleagues at the Scottish Office.

How firm have the Government been in emphasising the powers available to the courts and other relevant agencies to divert mentally disturbed offenders from the criminal justice system, not just in England and Wales but also in Scotland? We must deal with what is often described as the "revolving door syndrome". Organisations such as MIND frequently refer to the problem in that way. Many prisoners are likely to be serving short sentences for petty offences and will not be subject to any statutory supervision by the probation service on release. Many may also be homeless and rootless. The Minsiter will know what the Butler report had to say on that as long ago as 1975. Although I recognise that the Home Office and the Mental Health Foundation funded the three NACRO diversion projects to encourage changes in current arrangements, I wish to ask genuinely what progress the Home Office feels is being made on those important points.

The Minister will acknowledge that the Government have had the benefit of a number of reports, not simply the views of voluntary organisations, important though they are, like NACRO, MIND and the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped, but also their own Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' report from January 1990 to March 1991, which said:

"It is our view that there is an urgent need for the Prison Service to review facilities for disabled and handicapped inmates, staff and visitors in all establishments."

That was a profound comment, and when it is made at that level the House is entitled to hear of the response from the Home Office and other Departments involved.

There is also the report of the Reed committee. The Minister may wish to deal with that, but also with the representations made to his Department by MENCAP, MIND, the Patients Association, and many others who realise the importance of the issues raised.

The *British Medical Journal* expressed concern about such reports and what it considered to be elements of Government inaction when it, too, wrote an article headed, "Mentally disordered prisoners: reports but no improvements".

There is a real worry that, because the Government do not like information, we seem to be failing to get the response that the problems in those prisons, and of individuals in prisons, invite. The enormous strain on the prison medical service is self-evident. The whole House would wish to congratulate those who deal with such difficult issues. In November 1991, the Home Office published a consultation paper on the reform of the prison medical service. What will follow? What are the Government doing, given that the consultation document was published? What do they feel about the responses that they have received, and how much support are they giving to the prison medical service, which would be under enormous strain even if it were not for the problems of the large numbers of mentally ill or mentally handicapped persons who find themselves in prison?

The issues raised are particularly significant. We are concerned about the numbers of such people who find themselves in prison. We are also worried about the strain on, and demands made of, the staff, because clearly the management of such persons is out of all proportion to their numbers. I mentioned Brixton, but I think that suicide attempts occur elsewhere, which is why the rights of the individual have to be protected, and the Gunn report was based on the facts available to its author.

I shall put three specific questions to the Minister in the hope that, even if he cannot reply to them tonight, he will write to me with a considered response from the Home Office. According to *The Independent* on 1 June, £100 million is needed to support medical and nursing staff to meet the problems of mentally ill offenders. I do not know whether that figure is accurate, but I want to know whether the Government have made an assessment on resources and, if so, what conclusions they have reached.

Secondly, can the Minister tell us of the Home Office plans for pilot projects in the prison health service?

Thirdly, as we hear much about the privatisation of the prison service, and bearing in mind the vulnerable groups who are the subject of today's debate, it would not be unreasonable to ask whether the national health service will still be involved in the interests of such people. What are the Minister's thoughts on that matter, particularly in respect of mentally ill and mentally handicapped prisoners?

I thank the Minister for listening to my comments. Dr. Coyle, the governor of Brixton prison, said of the staff in prison who address the problems:

"There is a comradeship in adversity".

I want that comradeship to continue, but the adversity should be reduced. Do the Government share those objectives?

10.32 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on his success in securing tonight's Adjournment debate to raise the important issue of mentally ill and mentally handicapped people in prison. Over the years he has demonstrated a sincere regard for the rights and circumstances of those who are mentally ill and mentally handicapped. His was a well-informed and thoughtful speech. I hope that what I say this evening in the time available will answer some of his worries and set out clearly our present practices and policies for the future. There will be some items that, in the time left me, I shall not be able to cover. I shall take up his request and write to him on those matters.

The issue of mentally disordered people in prison has recently rightly commanded much public and media attention. It is now widely understood that the imprisonment of a mentally disturbed offender can aggravate his or her mental disorder. It is the Government's policy that mentally disturbed offenders should receive care and treatment from the health and social services. They should be diverted from the criminal justice system at the earliest possible opportunity. The hon. Gentleman and I are agreed on that.

Mentally disordered people should be prosecuted, but only where that is required in the public interest. In other cases alternatives to prosecution should be found. To encourage that, the Government have issued guidance to the police, courts and the probation service, and are pursuing with the police ways of improving their working relationship with health and social services. Together with the Mental Health Foundation we have provided funding for three pilot projects organised by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders to encourage the diversion of mentally disordered offenders from the criminal justice system. We are giving the foundation an annual grant of £250,000 to enable it to support diversion projects.

We are now also planning a series of regional conferences for senior managers and representatives of health and social services and the criminal justice agencies to help them to plan an improved response by their services to the needs of the mentally disordered who come before the courts. However, criminal offences are committed by people who suffer from mental disorder, and from time to time those people will inevitably find themselves before the courts. The courts should be guided by the provisions of the Mental Health Act 1983, which enables mentally disordered offenders to be directed away from prison.

To ensure that the provisions of that Act are fully understood and complied with, the Home Office issued detailed guidance in 1990. This drew to the attention of the courts and others the need to make greater use of their powers under the Mental Health Act. Those powers include the ability to remand a defendant to hospital for psychiatric reports. Persons remanded to prison or convicted prisoners may be transferred to hospital following medical reports that the individual concerned is suffering from mental disorder.

Furthermore, prison sentences for offenders who are mentally disordered at the time of their appearance in court may be avoided altogether if the court so decides, and the offender detained in hospital.

There has been a significant improvement in the number of prisoners transferred to hospital. During 1991, 470 prisoners were transferred under sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act, compared with 325 in 1990 and 137 in 1986. This represents an increase over the past year of 45 per cent. and prison medical officers and Home Office officials are continuing their efforts to identify and transfer prisoners to hospital where appropriate. We expect to transfer at least 600 this year.

The policy is clear. Imprisonment is not appropriate for the mentally disordered. However, the Government are aware that, despite the improvements, there is still some way to go. There are still in our prisons some mentally disordered offenders who should be directed to hospital, and some who are mentally disordered but are not detainable under the Mental Health Act and cannot, therefore, be transferred to hospital solely because of that mental disorder. For this second group the commitment must be to provide adequate facilities and specialised care and support.

It was to assist us to establish the extent of this problem that we commissioned research from Professor John Gunn of the Institute of Psychiatry in 1988. This was one of the two reports to which the hon. Member for Monklands, West referred. The report was published last year and a copy is in the Library. Clearly, the hon. Gentleman has read it with care.

The report commented on the existing facilities for the treatment of mental disorder in prison, and made recommendations for improvement. We are giving careful consideration to Professor Gunn's recommendations and are in the process of developing a strategy for the care of those prisoners with mental health needs for whom transfer to hospital is not appropriate. A joint Home Office and Department of Health review of health and social services for mentally disordered offenders and others requiring similar services was announced by my hon. Friend the then Under-Secretary of State for Health in November 1990. The hon. Gentleman also referred to that report.

The steering committee of the review met at the beginning of 1991 under the chairmanship of Dr. John Reed, senior principal medical officer at the Department of Health, and has since been referred to as the Reed committee. It has to date made good progress and is due to end next month when the steering committee will submit a final report to Ministers.

The review has published eight interim reports, together with an overview document. These are the reports of the prisons, hospital and community advisory groups which were issued to interested bodies for consultation in November of last year, and they have elicited some 200 responses from a range of agencies.

On 2 June reports of the advisory groups concerned with finance, staffing and training, research, academic development and services for mentally disordered offenders with special needs were issued for consultation purposes. The advisory groups have made 87 recommendations that are intended to improve the co-ordination and delivery of care and treatment for mentally disordered offenders. These provide guidance on the range and magnitude of health and social services provision that may be required, as well as the systems necessary to identify and assess the needs of those who should be diverted from the criminal justice system to more suitable treatment centres. Several of the recommendations for the mental health care of mentally disordered prisoners are entirely in accord with proposals that are set out in the White Paper on the prison service entitled "Custody, Care and Justice" and in the recent consultation paper on contracting for prison health services.

The reports underwrite the Government's policy that mentally disordered offenders who need care and treatment should receive it from the health and social services rather than from the criminal justice system. It is not our intention that action should be delayed merely because the review is still taking place. Indeed, we are at present considering, with colleagues in the Department of Health, the present recommendations with the aim of identifying those that can be implemented at an early date. One such is the provision of additional beds in regional secure units. A further £18 million has been allocated to the building programme. This should ensure the provision of an extra 400 medium secure beds by the end of 1994.

The recommendations contained in the reports provide an opportunity to make radical improvements to the way in which mentally disordered offenders are treated in our society. As the hon. Gentleman implied, they have considerable resource implications. The cost of a bed for such transfers from the prison system to a local hospital

*[The Minister of State, Home Office]*

could cost £30,000 to £40,000 a year. Transfer to a regional secure centre could cost upwards of £70,000 a year a bed. The cost of a bed in a special hospital would be similar. It is important that we get our plans right because they are certainly costly.

With the close co-operation that has been achieved between our Departments through the review I believe that we can develop a system whereby the mentally disordered should be cared for as far as possible in the community under conditions of no greater security than is justified and with the quality of care and attention that they require.

I intended to refer to several other matters but my time is limited. I shall deal, however, with the hon. Gentleman's question about the impact of the private management of prisons. I hope that in the end it will be small. I say that because I hope that we shall divert, before they get to prison, offenders who need treatment elsewhere. Should such offenders arrive in a prison, which will happen from time to time, the medical service in the prison—whether provided under contract by the national health service or by a private health provider—will operate in the same way as the rest of the prison service. It will diagnose those who should not be in prison and they will then be moved out of the prison service into an NHS institution—it will be an NHS institution for the foreseeable future. There will be no difference in approach between the privately managed prision and the public sector prison.

The hon. Gentleman referred to Brixton when talking about the need to give appropriate treatment. He is aware that we have been developing an acute psychiatric unit in Brixton that will provide a high standard of medical and nursing care and an improved regime for acutely disturbed inmates for whom transfer to hospital is not immediately possible or perhaps not necessary. The building works are completed and arrangements are in hand to select personnel who are qualified to staff the unit. The unit will be brought into use once the staff are in post.

I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about the matters that I have not had time to cover. I am glad that he has given me the opportunity to put on record what I have this evening because he has raised an important subject.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 25 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 2 July.*

### PETERHEAD HARBOURS ORDER CONFIRMATION

Mr. Secretary Lang presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Peterhead harbours; and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered on Wednesday 1 July and to be printed. [Bill 45.]



# Oral Answers to Questions

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Overseas Adoptions

1. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from couples wishing to adopt orphans from Romania and other countries overseas; and if he will make a statement.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley):** Early in 1990, representations were made to the then Secretary of State, on behalf of two couples, expressing an interest in adopting a child from Romania. No other representations have been received by the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend will be aware of new and improved procedures in train for handling such cases, and Northern Ireland will be keeping in line with national policy and practice.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my hon. Friend acknowledge the excellent work done by United Kingdom volunteers in the Romanian orphanages? Will he do all that he can to help couples who wish to adopt a child from overseas, especially in view of the recent difficulties with the Romanian adoption committee's agreement, which effectively prevents more than a handful of Romania's 100,000 orphans from being adopted?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his interest in this important matter. I assure him that we also take the keenest interest in this. We are working hard with the Romanian authorities, although I am sure that my hon. Friend will realise that, with adoption from other countries, it is up to the countries concerned to deal with the way in which their nationals leave those countries. The Romanians set high standards of assessment of prospective adopters and the scope for change is somewhat limited. We are doing all that we can to help and I shall be grateful for any assistance that my hon. Friend can give.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** While I welcome the raising of standards in Romania and the implications of that for Romania, is not it a fact that, in Northern Ireland, couples have been turned down because they were offered what in my judgment was an improper choice? They had either to opt out of the infertility clinic or go for the adoption of a child from Romania. Is not that an unfair choice, especially for those who have done an excellent job in helping such children?

**Mr. Hanley:** I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but I am not aware of such a choice being presented to couples. I shall ask my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State responsible for health and social services to look into that matter.

**Sir James Kilfedder:** Bearing in mind the magnificent response of the Ulster people to the tragic plight of the Romanian orphans, will the Minister let the House know whether the Department of Health in Northern Ireland has joined with the overseas adoption help line, which gives advice to those who wish to adopt Romanian children?

**Mr. Hanley:** Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is an overseas adoption help line, which I believe was launched only last month by the Department of Health in London. I understand that it is becoming a bit of a habit to give out telephone numbers in the Chamber. Will my hon. Friend take on board the number 071 226 7666? If anyone who would like to adopt an inter-country child rings that number, he or she will get the very best advice.

### Interrogation Procedures

2. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will introduce the videoing of interrogation procedures in Northern Ireland holding centres for a trial period.

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Michael Mates):** No.

**Mr. Bennett:** Will the Minister accept that, in agreeing to appoint an independent commissioner, the Government accept that they have a problem? Will he agree that it can be extremely difficult for an independent commissioner to move round without some security clearance, and that therefore it will still be known when visits will be made to interrogation centres? Would it not be far simpler to have lay visitors and video recording of all interviews?

**Mr. Mates:** The position is as it was as a result of the Bennett report, the name of which at least should be familiar to the hon. Gentleman, which recommended that there should be silent video monitoring of all interrogations at the holding centres, which is now in place, and recommended against the video recording of such interviews, for some very good reasons. The hon. Gentleman is right. We are proposing to introduce an independent commissioner for the holding centres and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I hope to be in a position to make an announcement about that shortly.

**Mr. Hunter:** I strongly support my hon. Friend on the undesirability of video recording interrogations, but may I ask him again to take the opportunity to stress what importance he attaches to the need to restore confidence in the process so that confidence in the police and the Royal Ulster Constabulary is high and out-of-court settlements are avoided? Will he assure us that he will make that a major point for his consideration?

**Mr. Mates:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The security forces, the Government and I are satisfied that safeguards exist against any form of abuse of the proper process. Everybody is clear that the interrogations must be carried out fully within the law and the regulations. Like my hon. Friend, I hope that there will be no further cases where compensation is paid for anything that has gone wrong, but I would point out that often what has gone wrong is of a minor administrative nature and nothing to do with the sort of ill-treatment that is alleged and for which there is no evidence.

**Mr. Maginnis:** We are all agreed about safeguards for suspects, which have been greatly improved during the past five or six years, but will the Minister remember that we are dealing with totally ruthless terrorists in our holding centres and that we must think about our obligations to our vulnerable police service and the law-abiding community? Will he ensure, on the question of video-taping, that no unnecessary initiative is handed back to the terrorist?

**Mr. Mates:** I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's point. I repeat that the monitoring of all interviews at all time by a uniformed police inspector, who is no part of the interrogation process, is a safeguard against the ill-treatment of any suspect who has been detained for questioning, and the appointment, when it comes, of an independent commissioner to oversee the procedure independently, separate from the Government, will merely confirm that.

### Irish Government

3. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met members of the Irish Government to discuss matters relating to Northern Ireland.

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew):** I met the Irish Foreign and Justice Ministers on 27 April at an intergovernmental conference. I have had several telephone conversations since then with Mr. Andrews, the Irish Foreign Minister, the most recent on 22 June.

**Mr. Winnick:** I congratulate the Secretary of State on his persistence in the talks, in which he has the Opposition's full support. Has he discussed with his counterparts in the Irish Republic the possibility that if, as we all hope, the talks succeed, there could be a referendum in Northern Ireland and the Republic, and that if there is a clear majority in favour of what could well be negotiated it would further undermine the claims of the terrorists on each side of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland that they have any kind of mandate to carry on with their killings?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman says and I greatly appreciate the interest that he takes and the attitude that he consistently displays towards the problems of countering terrorism in Northern Ireland and also to securing better institutions of government in Northern Ireland. It is extremely important that, whatever structures emerge from the process, which we all hope will succeed, shall have the highest degree of acceptance on both sides of the community. I think that my counterparts in the Irish Government share that view of mine to the full.

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** Will the Secretary of State inform the House what discussions he has had with his opposite number in Dublin on the calling of a meeting in the formation of strand 3 to have a preliminary discussion with the Northern Ireland parties present on the likely matters that would arise as that strand 3 goes on? Can he tell us why there has been a delay from 12 June until today, with meetings called tentatively and cancelled? Can he further tell us who is putting the barriers in the road and what the objections from Dublin are? When will the meeting take place and will it do so exactly as it was called by the plenary?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The parties to the talks agreed on 12 June, with the consent of both Governments, that a

meeting should take place in what is described as strand 3 formation to discuss in a preliminary way the agenda for, and the matters that might arise in, the strand 3 stage of the talks. It is important to maintain the momentum of the talks, which have already achieved much agreement.

I had hoped that the meeting, to which both Governments and all parties remain committed, would take place this week. I am sorry that the Irish Government could not agree to that, but I am hopeful that it will take place in the near future. Our officials are meeting now, and I believe that there is every prospect that the kind of meeting that we have in mind will take place very soon.

**Mr. Hume:** Will the discussions with the Irish Government deal with the subject of so-called border checkpoints and, in particular, their intensification since the Secretary of State took office? Will the Secretary of State confirm that nothing is ever found at the checkpoints, that they are merely targets and that the victims are the young soldiers and policemen who man them? The last seven soldiers to die in my constituency were all killed at checkpoints, which have now been extended to include private homes in such places as Culmore and Molenan.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The question of cross-border co-operation and border security is a constantly recurring theme at the intergovernmental conferences. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's view about the usefulness of the checkpoints; more important and more persuasively, it is not shared by those who are responsible for security in the border areas.

Great improvement can be reported in cross-border co-operation between south and north, but more remains to be done. Unfortunately, the border still constitutes a considerable advantage for the terrorist and the checkpoints provide a valuable means of checking that advantage.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** My right hon. and learned Friend has just given us the heartening news that there has been some progress in cross-border co-operation. Will he go further and tell us whether, when he last met the Justice Minister of the Republic of Ireland, he gave him a list of wanted IRA terrorist suspects whose extradition to the United Kingdom to face trial is currently required? If so, has there been any progress on that front since the meeting?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** There is no need for me to give Mr. Flynn such a list, because the names in question are already well known to the Irish authorities.

It is necessary for each country to have effective extradition machinery. Let me remind the House that the judiciary in the Republic of Ireland is no less independent than the judiciary in this country. Although—from the point of view of a Minister who wants persons against whom a proper case exists to be brought to trial in this country—I share the frustration that is felt in regard to some recent events and decisions, it must be borne in mind that both the prosecuting authorities and the judiciary in the Republic have the same degree of independence as those in this country.

**Mr. Trimble:** I welcome the Secretary of State's confirmation that his announcement on Friday 12 June that a meeting in strand 3 formation and inter-party talks would take place this week was made after consultation with the Irish Government. Does he appreciate our disappointment that the meeting failed to take place, especially as this is the first week since the talks began in which no progress has been made? Will he devote the maximum effort to ensuring that that meeting, and those that would follow from it, take place as soon as possible?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Naturally, I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment, as I think I have made clear. The lesson of Irish affairs is that one looks not backwards to the last bridge under which the water has flowed but forwards to the future. I have every hope that we shall have a meeting very soon.

**Mr. Peter Robinson:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that, no matter how much foot dragging and time wasting there may be from the Government of the Irish Republic, Her Majesty's Government will not welsh on the agreement of 12 June, but will comply with it in every part —in particular that there will be a meeting between two Governments and not between civil servants? Will he assure the House that the purpose of the meeting in strand 3 formation will be to give preliminary consideration to the issues that may arise in strand 3 and not, as he said earlier, to set an agenda?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The language of the agreement is perfectly clear and is set out in the third paragraph. I do not dissent from what the hon. Gentleman said. It is not, if I recall, specified whether the meeting will be at ministerial or official level. What is specified is that matters that are likely to arise in strand 3 discussions can be the subject of preliminary discussion or examination at that time. I think that there is every prospect that the meeting will take place in a manner that is satisfactory to all concerned.

**Mr. McNamara:** Is the Secretary of State aware that Labour would like to see greater use made of the Criminal Justice Jurisdiction Act to avoid many of the problems that have arisen with extradition in the past? We share the Secretary of State's disappointment that a meeting was not held this week and hope that one will be held shortly, but will he confirm that the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach may talk about some of these matters at the margins of the Lisbon summit? Will he further confirm that for the strand 2 talks there was again a formation period or the preparation of an agenda, as we are having on strand 3, and that we are not having specific negotiations and agreements as we go along?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** Taking the last point first, it is not a question of getting into the substance of the matters that can be expected to arise. These are preliminary meetings, and the one that took place last Friday under the chairmanship of Sir Ninian Stephen was generally regarded as having been very workmanlike, successful and helpful. It is not appropriate for me to anticipate what, if anything, may take place between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in Lisbon. The use that is sought to be made of the Criminal Justice Jurisdiction Act is a matter for the Attorney-General or the Minister of Justice in the Republic. I recall from my previous occupation that there is no reluctance here to use the Criminal Justice Jurisdiction Act, if it is appropriate, having regard to the nature of the offence, that a case should be tried in the Republic of Ireland rather than here. It saves a lot of difficulty if that course is taken, but not every offence makes that appropriate.

## Inter-party Talks

4. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the inter-party talks.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** There have been substantive constructive exchanges in strand 1 of the talks under my chairmanship. Sir Ninian Stephen last week chaired a meeting between representatives of the Government, the Irish Government and the four parties. It completed consideration of a possible agenda for strand 2 of the talks. I hope for an early meeting in strand 3 formation to give preliminary consideration to the issues that are likely to arise in that strand.

**Mr. Duncan-Smith:** I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend and all those concerned on proceeding so successfully through strand 1 to strand 2 of the talks. However, I recall that in 1976 there were signboards all over Northern Ireland saying that seven years was too much, yet here we are 16 years further down the road with the same problems. In the light of that, will he inform the House, clearly, who is responsible for the delay in proceeding to strand 3 and assure us that we will get to the pre-strand 3 talks very soon?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I am grateful for the good wishes with which my hon. Friend began his question, but we are not yet into strand 2. We have had a preliminary meeting to discuss an agenda, but the moment has not arisen when I think it right to propose the transition to strand 2 proper.

It is worth pointing out that all involved in the talks have shown real determination to make a success of them and have applied themselves to a very difficult task with, in my respectful opinion, great imagination and determination. I hope that we can now look forward to the pre-meeting for strand 3 and not dwell on the disappointment of not being able to achieve that meeting this week. I have said what I wanted to say about that, and I believe that there are now good prospects for having the type of preliminary meeting that we all want.

**Mr. Mallon:** Will the Secretary of State inform the House why he has not yet called a substantive meeting of strand 2, as he is required to do by the statement made in the House on 26 March? Will he also inform the House whether he or any of his colleagues gave a written commitment to the Democratic Unionist party that a strand 3 formation meeting would take place this week? If he did, will he confirm that he gave such a written commitment to all the other party leaders involved in the talks? If he did not, will he surmise where such a written commitment may have come from?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The answer to the second part of the question is no, I did not. In answer to the first, I have a rather better recollection of what my right hon. Friend said on 26 March 1991 about the foundation for the whole process of the talks. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is required, when he thinks the moment is right, to propose the transition to strand 2 after consulting the parties. I do not yet think that that moment has arrived. I look forward to it arriving and I wish it to arrive as soon as possible, but I shall not—*[Interruption.]* Rather than being shouted at by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), I should like to finish the answer. I do not wish to prejudice the outcome of strand 2 by proposing it prematurely.

**Mr. Molyneaux:** If the Anglo-Irish Agreement is such a wonderful instrument for consultation, does the Secretary of State have any idea why it has already taken two weeks to establish a mere preliminary strand 3 meeting which, after all, was foreshadowed as much as 15 months ago?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** All institutions are mortal and, therefore, fallible—and it seems to me that some are more mortal than others. Those of us who consider the issues of the government of Northern Ireland from any standpoint do not have an easy task, and we must make the best use that we can of the structures already in existence in our task of getting agreement for better and more effective structures. That is what all of us are about.

## Secondary Schools

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the structure of the secondary school system in Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Hanley:** The secondary system of education in most areas of Northern Ireland operates on the basis of selection at 11-plus. It is very popular, and there are no plans to change it at the moment.

**Mrs. Gorman:** Does my hon. Friend agree that among the many excellent aspects of life in Northern Ireland is the quality of its secondary education? Is not it a fact that Northern Ireland has the lowest level of illiteracy, the highest number of A-level results and one of the lowest level of truancy in the United Kingdom? Does not that show that if some form of selection were returned to the rest of the United Kingdom—as might well happen under the Government's new proposals—it would be very good for children in the rest of Britain?

**Mr. Hanley:** I shall restrict my comments to Northern Ireland and confirm many of the statistics that my hon. Friend mentioned: 30 per cent. of Northern Ireland school leavers achieve at least one A-level, compared to 24 per cent. in England; 75 per cent. of those leaving the grammar schools do so with at least one A-level; 41 per cent. of all Northern Ireland school leavers achieve at least five good GCSE grades, compared to 37 per cent. in England, and finally, 52 per cent. of all school leavers in Northern Ireland go on to further or higher education, compared to 37 per cent. in England.

However, I warn my hon. Friend that the selection system is not all rosy, for the simple reason that in Northern Ireland, 15 per cent. of children leave school without any qualifications, compared to 8 per cent. in England—although that 15 per cent. is well below the 27 per cent. of only 10 years ago. That is the issue on which we must concentrate.

**Mr. Beggs:** The Minister will be aware that parents make comparisons between grammar schools and secondary schools in Northern Ireland. Will he continue to seek adequate funding for secondary schools and ensure that their accommodation and equipment are sufficient to deliver the national curriculum? Will he also seek the support of other departments in the Northern Ireland

Office and enlist their help so that they can deal sensitively with areas such as Rathcoole in my constituency, where secondary schools are being rationalised?

**Mr. Hanley:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that under the education reform capital programme substantial moneys are already being spent exactly as he requests. In the three years to March 1992, more than £45 million has been spent to deliver the common curriculum requirements, and a further £57 million is to be spent over the next three years.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's worries about Rathcoole. I have received representations from him, for which I am grateful. I can assure him that there will be great sensitivity. My Department has already had preliminary discussions with the North Eastern education and library board about the rationalisation of secondary school provision in the area. The final proposals will, of course, be subject to the normal provisions.

**Mr. Brooke:** In the context of his supplementary answer, will my hon. Friend confirm that the proportion of those leaving school without any qualifications in Northern Ireland has been falling more rapidly in recent years than in Great Britain?

**Mr. Hanley:** I can confirm that, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I said that 27 per cent. of children leaving school in Northern Ireland in 1979-80 left with no qualifications. We can imagine what idle hands can be turned to. The figure now is 15 per cent., which represents rapid progress—and that progress was especially marked in Northern Ireland under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke).

**Mr. Stott:** The Minister will be aware that the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 introduced open enrolment provisions which made it illegal for an integrated school to use criteria which allowed it to maintain a balance. If that is not changed, and integrated schools are forced to accept whatever enrolments are made, regardless of the religious balance which would result, they will not be able to be what is generally described as genuinely integrated. I understand that the Windmill integrated school in Dungannon has been placed in that position, with the education board forcing it to accept children so that the balance would be upset. The school has refused, which has led to legal action being taken against it. Is the Minister aware of that position? If so, how does he intend to ensure that the integrated schools ideal in Northern Ireland is maintained?

**Mr. Hanley:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. I am indeed aware of the problem, but it is a problem which was established within the legislation in the first place. The subject must be reconsidered. I cannot say exactly how, so I cannot answer the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, but the matter is being actively considered at this moment. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's interest, and I look forward to any further advice that he may offer.

## Business Start-ups

6. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many inquiries the local enterprise development unit had in 1991 regarding business start-up and related matters.

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins):** A total of 6,833.

**Mr. Deva:** Does not that demonstrate clearly and without a shadow of doubt that Government support for small businesses in the Province remains strong?

**Mr. Atkins:** Of course—the Government in Northern Ireland is no different from the Government in any other part of the United Kingdom in terms of their commitment to small businesses, and I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the position will remain the same so long as I am doing this job.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** Is the Minister aware that most people in Northern Ireland want encouragement to be given to small and medium-sized companies, but that what is important is not just the number of applications but the number which are efficiently dealt with by the Local Enterprise Development Unit? Is he aware that there is increasing concern about LEDU's delays in processing applications and that small businesses are deciding not to bother to make submissions to LEDU but to go ahead without support?

**Mr. Atkins:** With a new chairman and a new Minister, it is the intention that any problems that have arisen will be dealt with. That is not to suggest that my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) was anything other than extremely successful in his tenure of office. If the right hon. Gentleman has particular points in mind that he wishes me to address, I should be grateful if he would write to me.

**Mr. Bellingham:** My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that there are still fewer people employed in the small firms sector of the Province than is the case in other parts of the Kingdom. Does he agree that one of the best ways to break down sectarian barriers is to encourage enterprise, initiative and entrepreneurs? What steps will he take to reduce dependency on the public sector in Ulster?

**Mr. Atkins:** My hon. Friend makes an entirely fair point. Clearly there is always a need to consider how we reduce support from Government. That can come about only if there are more and more successful companies and, of course, successful companies have small beginnings. I want to take away the drip feed system to which my hon. Friend refers as soon as is realistically possible. That would represent an amazing success story for Northern Ireland, but I suspect that it will be some time before that can happen. However, I am conscious of my hon. Friend's interest and of the pressure that he will bring to bear in that regard.

## Electoral Office

7. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in defining terms and conditions of staff in the Northern Ireland electoral office.

**Mr. Hanley:** The terms and conditions of service of staff employed to assist the chief electoral officer are explained in letters of appointment and for the most part are linked to those of the Northern Ireland civil service. Those terms and conditions of service are now being codified by the chief electoral officer.

**Mr. Forsythe:** Can the Minister explain why no grievance procedure is available for staff who wish to appeal and why certain electoral matters that require clarification appear to be decided arbitrarily, in a way which shows little regard for existing legislation?

**Mr. Hanley:** The chief electoral officer is an independent officer and it would be difficult to provide for any external channel of appeal other than the courts, but I am willing to consider any proposals on how that might be achieved. I invite the hon. Gentleman to talk to me about any particular problem in that regard. These are important issues and I would welcome his advice and consultation.

## Hospital Trusts

**Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ensure that each hospital application for trust status is evaluated in a way which safeguards the relevant health board's obligation to deliver acute hospital services efficiently and effectively within its area of responsibility.

**Mr. Hanley:** The health and social services boards are responsible for securing services that meet the needs of their populations and they will contract with a range of providers, including trusts, to obtain those services. In that context, trusts will be no different from other providers.

**Mr. Maginnis:** Does the Minister understand my fear that the Western and Southern health boards will find strategic planning for the delivery of acute hospital services virtually impossible if they lose direct influence over Altnagelvin and Craigavon hospitals, respectively? Will he bear in mind that it is crucial not to allow essential services to be endangered by sanctioning a go-it-alone approach by those two main hospitals?

**Mr. Hanley:** I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that in establishing trusts there is no opting out of the national health service. Health and social services boards in Northern Ireland will provide the full range of services that they provide at present, so any unit that is to be a provider of health care must provide for the people of the area. No board would want to contract with a provider of services unless a good range of services was provided. There would be a far better delivery of health care, especially in the Western board area, than there is at present. As the hon. Gentleman knows, no units in the Western board are currently planning to ask for trust status.

**Rev. William McCrea:** Bearing in mind the future of trust hospitals, will the Minister assure my constituents, who are deeply worried, that no decision has been taken by his noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State regarding the Omagh maternity unit? Will he assure me that the Minister will give most earnest consideration to the united appeal from every section of our community in Mid-Ulster on this vital matter?

**Mr. Hanley:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for health and social services in Northern Ireland is considering carefully the issue to which the hon. Gentleman referred. The hon. Gentleman will know that my noble Friend has visited both Omagh and Fermanagh in recent weeks and hopes to reach a decision within the next two or three weeks.

**Mr. McGrady:** Is the Minister aware that the Downe hospital in Downpatrick has applied for trust status? How does he explain that application in the context of the findings of the Down and Lisburn unit of management document that a new hospital should be built? Will he consider that in the context of the directive that the Eastern health board has received from the Department which would close three hospitals in the constituency of South Down? Is the Minister aware of the tremendous distress and worry that that is causing to the people of Northern Ireland, especially as the consultation period is a sham and the Minister at the Northern Ireland Office will not be able to answer to the House for that consultation?

**Mr. Hanley:** While I answer for health in Northern Ireland in this House, my noble Friend will consider the application for trust status made by the unit to which the hon. Gentleman referred and those made by other units, but I know that he will do so only after full consultation. I know that my noble Friend will consider the application carefully and that consultation with the hon. Gentleman and all others in the community will be most welcome.

## Housing

9. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many units of housing are now administered *(a)* by local councils, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* other bodies; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Atkins:** At 31 March 1992, 11,543 units were administered by registered housing associations and 162,371 were administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is the sole public housing authority in the province. Local councils and other public bodies administer a few houses for their own employees, but the figures are not available.

**Mr. Greenway:** Are those units of housing sufficient to meet the housing needs of the people of Northern Ireland? Will my hon. Friend comment on the outstanding achievements of the Housing Executive, which has worked to the satisfaction of all sections of the community? Should not those efforts be warmly supported and encouraged?

**Mr. Atkins:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's interest in the matter. The Housing Executive in Northern Ireland is probably the most effective of its type anywhere in this country and probably in Europe. It is certainly true to say that the reduction in recent years of the waiting list for urgent housing illustrates the important achievement that the Housing Executive has made. I am particularly grateful to the distinguished chairman and members of the Housing Executive for the work that they do.

**Mr. William Ross:** Given that one of the greatest strengths of housing associations in Northern Ireland is the local people involved in them, will the Minister give an

undertaking to the House and the people of Northern Ireland that he will maintain the distinct identities of each such housing association and steadfastly resist any efforts to amalgamate them into a private version of the Housing Executive?

**Mr. Atkins:** The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I was present at a recent function that all the housing associations attended. As one who was formerly actively involved in housing matters on a local authority, I know only too well the importance of small local housing associations. They fulfil a particular need in a particular area. At this stage I am not prepared to give an unequivocal assurance to the hon. Gentleman along the lines that he requested. However, I understand the sentiments that he expresses and I am, as they say, minded to agree with him. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House is very restless. I hope that it will settle down. It is disconcerting for hon. Members who have the Floor.

## Agents

10. **Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about publishing the official guidelines for the handling of agents in Northern Ireland.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** I have received none.

**Ms. Coffey:** Will the Secretary of State confirm that the guidelines are being reviewed? Will he undertake to report to the House on the outcome of the review? Will he also take this opportunity to apologise to the relatives of the victims of the activities of Mr. Nelson and his colleagues because murder is murder, whoever is responsible?

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** The question relates to the Home Office guidelines, and reviewing them is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, not for me. On the Nelson case—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Lady's attention could be directed to the answer—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The Minister is attempting to answer the hon. Lady.

**Sir Patrick Mayhew:** First, Nelson is serving 10 years imprisonment, imposed in a number of sentences, for very serious offences. Secondly, it is implicit in that sentence that all members of the security forces—those who work with them and for them—are subject to the unbending discipline of the rule of law. They understand that. They understand why it is the case, and they recognise that it is and must remain the case. It follows that if any criminal offence is committed by anyone acting with or on behalf of the security forces, those who suffer in consequence have suffered a wrong, and that is regrettable. There is no getting round that; nor does anyone wish to do so. That said, the security forces face an immensely difficult and dangerous task in combating terrorism—a task that they approach with great dedication and success.

# PRIME MINISTER

## Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Betts:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Betts:** Is the Prime Minister aware of reports that dentists in Huntingdon are to refuse to treat any new patients, including children, under the national health service because of Government cuts in funding? How will the Prime Minister explain to his constituents that, despite repeated excuses, the Government are failing to give the NHS the level of resources necessary to enable it to provide a first-class level of treatment for all?

**The Prime Minister:** There is no question of anyone needing to go without a national health service dentist in Huntingdon. Dentists in Cambridgeshire have more patients than the national average because of population growth. A recruitment campaign for dentists has been planned for some time and will go ahead in September. If necessary, the local family health services authority will seek agreement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health to employ salaried dentists. Four dentists are already interested in such appointments. If people have any trouble finding dentists, they should go to their family health services authority, which should be able to help.

**Mr. Dykes:** May I wish my right hon. Friend well in the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community? Will he ensure that Ministers work hard in the coming months to explain the immense benefits of the Maastricht treaty to the interests of this country—*[Interruption.]* which will become clearer over time? If that work is successful, it will help to diminish some of the grotesque xenophobia and hysteria of recent weeks.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he knows, the Maastricht agreement was made within the negotiating terms agree by the House, was subsequently endorsed by the House and was agreed at a general election. The Second Reading of the Bill has been approved, it remains Government policy and in due course we shall carry it through.

**Mr. Hattersley:** Will the Prime Minister confirm that the Government now support the extension of Mr. Delors' term of office as president of the European Commission?

**The Prime Minister:** It is a matter that will be discussed at the weekend. There is, as I understand it, likely to be only one candidate. If that is Mr. Delors, we shall support him.

**Mr. Hattersley:** Since I take it that that answer is as far as the Prime Minister's reserves of courage are liable to go towards the answer yes, will he give Mr. Delors the Opposition's congratulations—*[Interruption]* and tell Mr. Delors that we confidently expect him to continue to implement policies which are necessary for this country, are supported by the Labour party and are anathema to Tory Back Benchers?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not entirely sure that the right hon. Gentleman carried all his Friend's with him.

**Sir Fergus Montgomery:** Has my right hon. Friend seen the recent survey that showed that 91 per cent. of British exporters reported either good or very good orders for the first three months of this year? Does he agree that the efforts made by British exporters will lead the way to recovery?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Last month's export figures were extremely good. They were up 6 per cent. by value and 4½ per cent. by volume. I think that that shows the extent to which our competitiveness has increasingly enabled us to penetrate export markets which were previously not open to us.

Q2. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Michie:** When will the Prime Minister stop going on about his wonderful citizens charter which, so far as I can see, has had only one effect until now, which is that British Rail passengers can keep their tickets? At a much more serious level, pregnant women cannot keep their jobs. What good is a charter which does not allow women to be pregnant without being punished for it?

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Gentleman cared to read the whole range of citizens charters that we have produced, he would realise that it is a far wider-ranging initiative than he has begun to understand. It puts the consumer and not the producer first, and it will remain right at the heart of Government policy throughout the rest of this decade.

Q3. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mrs. Gorman:** May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the remarks that he made on Tuesday, when he said that there would be another debate in the House on the Maastricht Bill before Third Reading? May I recommend the attitude of one of his predecessors, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who allowed a free vote of the House in similar circumstances when he was piloting the European Communities legislation through the House? Does my right hon. Friend not agree that that would be an excellent way to test the water before we come to voting on the Maastricht Bill?

**The Prime Minister:** I was not a Member of the House at that moment, and I am not entirely sure that I recall that free vote. The House has now debated and voted on the Maastricht agreement on three occasions. As I indicated a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), we contested the general election on that proposition—a general election at which all my hon. Friends were returned on a manifesto to which they all subscribed. The Maastricht treaty was negotiated in good faith by all member states. I have no intention of breaking the word of the British Government that was given on that occasion; nor do I have any intention of compromising what we agreed on that occasion and wrecking this country's reputation for plain and honest dealing and good faith. In due course, therefore, I shall be inviting my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the Government and the Bill.

**Dr. Wright:** The Government have devoted many millions of pounds and many millions of copies to telling people about the glories of the parents charter and the patients charter. Will the Prime Minister tell the House how many millions of pounds and how many millions of copies have been devoted to telling the British people about the Maastricht treaty?

**The Prime Minister:** From memory, I think that the House spent 30 hours debating it before we even went to Maastricht. I do not think that there is any doubt about the realities of what the treaty stands for in the minds of the British people. They knew that at the election, and they supported it at the election.

Q4. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Milligan:** Will my right hon. Friend congratulate the Secretary of State for Employment on her triumph in Luxembourg yesterday? It is good news for pay packets, good news for jobs and good news for investment. Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that it shows that the best way to fight for British interests is to negotiate strongly, but with a reputation as a country which keeps the agreements that we make and ratifies the treaties that we sign?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I wholeheartedly agree with him. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment achieved an outcome at yesterday's Economic and Social Council which meets every one of the United Kingdom's most crucial objectives. She has preserved the flexibility which employers and employees in the United Kingdom enjoy and which is one of our greatest assets. I must tell the House, however, that the directive is still not—and may not be—agreed in the European Community. In any event, it is still our case, irrespective of the negotiating triumph by my right hon. Friend yesterday, that the treaty base under which it has been brought forward is wrong and that if it is passed we may still challenge it in the European Court.

## Homelessness

Q5. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister when he next plans to meet representatives of London's homeless.

**The Prime Minister:** I have no plans to do so at present, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment regularly meets representatives of the voluntary organisations in London who work with homeless people.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Does the Prime Minister realise that the 25 million sq ft of empty offices in London and still more under construction are an insult to the 2,000 people who sleep on the streets of the capital city every night and to the 18,000 people living in hostels? When will the Government

direct the construction industry to build houses for rent for those who need them, rather than speculative office blocks to lie idle for the benefit of property speculators? This is a crucial matter and the right hon. Gentleman stands condemned by those who are forced to sleep on the streets at night.

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman, standing in a glass house, should be careful where he throws his bricks. Of the top 10 authorities with empty properties, six are Labour controlled and none is Conservative controlled. If the hon. Gentleman were really concerned, he would be putting pressure on Manchester, Salford, Birmingham, Hackney, Knowsley and Newcastle upon Tyne. He might then get homeless people back into accommodation.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I remind the House that this is a closed question.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that homelessness in London is the result of decades of rent control, which Conservative rule got rid of, and of incompetence by high-spending Labour councils?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. There is scope for the private rented sector to grow and to provide low-cost flexible accommodation. The hostility of the Labour party over the years has cramped that growth and prevented that property becoming available for people who needed it. We have consistently sought to expand the privately rented sector, most recently with our proposed tax exemptions to help people who want to rent a room to do so. I hope that Opposition Members will support that policy.

## Engagements

Q6. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Beggs:** May I invite the Prime Minister to make time in his busy schedule to visit my constituency to see for himself why Larne is the second busiest ferry port in the United Kingdom and to hear from the people there why he should use his influence to persuade the European Commission that Larne, Belfast, Stranraer and Dumfries be recognised as Euro-routes to and from Northern Ireland?

**The Prime Minister:** I should be happy to take up that invitation from the hon. Gentleman. Northern Ireland is well served by its ports and I am confident that they will continue to provide the routes for most of the Province's business and tourist traffic to Great Britain and onwards to Europe. They have performed magnificently in the past and I believe that they will continue to do so, and to grow, in the future.

**Mr. Mans:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that what matters most to people is the amount that the Government take in tax from their wage packets? Bearing that in mind, may I ask him to confirm that he has no plans to follow the tax policies advocated by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) which, even in the view of many Labour Members, contributed greatly to the Opposition's defeat?

**The Prime Minister:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Our policies of low taxation and low inflation were clearly what the electorate wanted at the last general election. I am aware of the dispute about why the Opposition lost the election, and I am sorry to note that for the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) the honeymoon is over before the marriage has begun.

Q7. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 25 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Welsh:** Is the Prime Minister aware of the National Children's Home report issued this week, which shows that each day in Scotland 41,000 families on income support cannot afford to buy food, that 500 families are now housed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and that the city of Glasgow has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe? If the Prime Minister really believes in the family, does he share my disgust at that situation and my desire for urgent action?

**The Prime Minister:** The definition used by the National Children's Home for "poverty" was misleading, as the hon. Gentleman will know. He will also know that this year's uprating of income support was substantially higher than the retail prices index. The definition used by the National Children's Home defines someone as poor if he or she spends less than half the national average spending per head. The hon. Gentleman will realise that that measure of poverty excludes a Greek spending the average in Greece, while a richer person in the United Kingdom spending less than half the national average is classed as poor. That definition does not stand up to examination.

**Mr. Rupert Allason:** Will my right hon. Friend encourage the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to declassify as much material as possible dating from before the second world war before it is all released in Moscow and Washington?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sure that my right hon. Friends will have heard my hon. Friend's advice.

## Fishing Incident (Scilly Isles)

3.30 pm

**Mr. David Harris** (St. Ives) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the action by French fishermen against Cornish fishermen and their nets off the Scilly Isles last night. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving please do so quietly? We have a lot of business before us today and the Minister is waiting to respond to the private notice question.

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry):** The British fishing vessel, St. Uny, reported an incident between British netters and French trawlers at 1750 BST yesterday. The incident was reported to Falmouth Coastguard as taking place in a position 16 miles north-west of the Isles of Scilly. The coastguard requested that the fishery protection vessel HMS Brecon be sent to the area at 1830 BST. That was confirmed by the inspectorate duty officer at 1900 hours. At 1830 BST, the British fishing vessel Britannia IV advised the coastguard that it was being harassed by a number of French trawlers. Two of those vessels were identified as the Concarneau-registered Rhapsody and Larche.

The British vessels claim that the French vessels deliberately towed through their gear and, when the St. Uny approached the Larche to advise the position of the nets, it was pelted with lumps of metal and pieces of chain. HMS Brecon arrived at the scene at 2 o'clock this morning but by that time the vessels had left the area.

There have been a number of similar incidents previously, the most recent of which was just four days ago. On each occasion the French vessels were from Concarneau, and the Rhapsody was identified in an earlier incident.

The British vessels are fishing with bottom set tangle nets. It is reported, but not confirmed, that at least one of the British vessels is fishing an area of approximately 10 square miles. The British vessels have claimed that there has been extensive damage to their gear but there are happily no reports of any injuries or damage.

We shall take statements from the British vessels as soon as they arrive in their home ports. The Britannia and the Sardia Louise are back in Newlyn and we shall seek details today. We have just received new reports of a further incident involving the St. Uny and the Larche. We are investigating it urgently and HMS Brecon is on the scene and has orders to board the French vessel. That will take place within the hour.

Two hours ago, I spoke to the French Fisheries Minister, Mr. Charles Josselin, and expressed very forcibly the anger of British fishermen and my own anger at repeated incidents involving French vessels—often the same ones and involving the same English vessels—in these waters.

Mr. Josselin vigorously condemned the behaviour of the French boats. He will hold an inquiry to establish the facts once the boats are back in port, and if the allegations are confirmed he has promised very firm action. In particular, he indicated that two sanctions could be taken in the event of the allegations being substantiated: first, economic sanctions in the shape of compensation for loss of earnings and replacement or repair of gear; secondly, sanctions in the shape of the withdrawal of the captains' tickets. He asked me to send urgently all the evidence about the incidents and estimates of the losses sustained. The first details have already been sent.

This is a violent and outrageous incident. The British Government will sustain pressure on the French Government to make sure that their vessels are brought to book.

**Mr. Harris:** I thank my hon. Friend for that full statement and for the prompt action taken by Her Majesty's Government. Is he aware of the burning anger felt, particularly by Cornish fishermen, at the latest series of deplorable incidents, especially as they come at the end of a long line of similar outrages by some French vessels? Will he keep up the pressure on the French Government in the knowledge that it is only they who can ensure that this totally unacceptable behaviour is stamped on firmly? Will he ensure that the fishery protection vessel remains on station as long as there is any threat of further incidents, and that fishery protection will be intensified if there are any more such events? Will he welcome and support the action taken by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and the Cornish Fish Producers Organisation in establishing a sensible working arrangement with French fishermen, particularly those from the port of Concarneau?

**Mr. Curry:** Yes, I will. It is important that we do the maximum to sort out such problems bilaterally. I can assure my hon. Friend that the fishery protection vessel will remain on station while there is a risk. The district is also under aerial surveillance. It is important that the French discipline their fishing vessels. I shall maintain pressure on the French Government. I am as aware as my hon. Friend is that the incident was the last in a long sequence of clashes involving not merely French vessels, and we must bring such incidents to an end.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): Is the Minister aware that the fishing fleets of Cornwall and other parts of the United Kingdom will be concerned to ensure that there is effective prevention, not simply effective enforcement? Is the Minister aware that there was a considerable delay between the first call from the fishing boats involved and the arrival of HMS Brecon? Will he assure the House that, during the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of Ministers, the most effective steps will be taken to ensure that, if one member country is unable to deal effectively with such a scandal, the other countries will be in a position to take action?

Are any of the alleged offences extradictable? As it is an open secret that the Ministry is currently considering whether to continue the contract for fishery protection with the Royal Navy, will he confirm that the present conflict will not encourage the view that a privatised service would do the job better?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Before the Minister responds, may I make a plea to the House? A number of hon. Members are interested in the subject, so if each Member could ask just one question of the Minister, we could proceed quickly.

**Mr. Curry:** The Royal Navy vessel was on the scene quickly, but, as a matter of common sense, it must be obvious that we cannot patrol every square mile of the

ocean all the time—there are not enough Royal Navy vessels to do that. As for market testing, we are obliged to test that we receive value for money from all the services that we commission—that is now taking place. We will not make a decision that means that we do not receive a degree of fishery protection at least as good as the present service. We are finding out the facts of the incident from the crews of the French and British vessels so that the French Minister can be given the means to fulfil his promise. It is absolutely essential that member states discipline their vessels over such incidents, as we do.

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): In the event of those allegations being substantiated, could they lead to the arrest of the French fishing vessels which have been partaking in those dreadful incidents? Will my hon. Friend give an undertaking that, if that is so, those vessels will be arrested and, with the assistance of continued aerial surveillance, their skippers will be brought to the courts?

**Mr. Curry:** I gave my right hon. Friend the assurance that, when we can catch vessels and their crews who are guilty of an offence for which we have the powers to charge them, we will not hesitate to bring charges.

**Mr Austin Mitchell** (Great Grimsby): Does not this incident, paralleled as it is by similar outrages in the North sea on the part of Dutch beamers—particularly perpetrated on Grimsby vessels and their gear—show how crazy it would be to consider contracting out the fishery protection service?

**Mr. Curry:** We have to deliver protection to our fishing vessels. There are four fishery protection services: the aerial service in Scotland, the maritime service in Scotland, the aerial service in England and Wales, and the Navy. Three of those four are carried out by private contracted vessels entirely satisfactorily. That is not a reason to change; it does mean that we have to confirm whether we are getting the best value for money and the best protection that we can deliver to our fishermen. That is what we are doing—nothing more, nothing less.

**Mrs. Jacqui Lait** (Hastings and Rye): Does my hon. Friend accept that the fishermen of Hastings and Rye are just as concerned as the fishermen in the western approaches about this depredation by the French? Will he welcome with me the French insistence that they will take sanctions against those who perpetrate these incidents—and ensure that they will apply also to fishermen along the French coast opposite England?

**Mr. Curry:** The French were fishing where they had a right to fish—there was no question of their fishing there because of the derogation. They were fishing in international waters that come under the United Kingdom supervision framework. Of course, I accept that my hon. Friend's fishermen constituents are concerned about this. We are in the business of protecting all British fishermen. There have been repeated incidents, some of them between Englishmen and Cornishmen. The sensible thing to do is to sort out the matter as between friends and by gentleman's agreement—but if we cannot, we will have to ensure that we deliver protection. We will do so.

**Mr. Elliot Morley** (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The House will welcome the firm response from the French Minister, but we want not firmness of response but action to resolve such conflicts. Bearing in mind the violence of such conflicts and the threats to fishermen at sea, will the Minister reconsider his proposals for privatising fisheries protection? Does he agree that the Royal Navy commands considerable authority and respect; and that undermining that authority while fishing stocks decline—that is likely to lead to further conflicts—will put at risk our fishermen at sea?

**Mr. Curry:** No, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's premise. A significant part of our fishery protection is already carried out by private contractors, and we receive no complaints about its efficiency. We will therefore be testing the market to determine whether we get best value for money. We are nowhere near making a decision yet, but whatever decision is taken, it will deliver full fishery protection to our vessels. That is the whole point of the exercise.

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is growing anger and resentment in the west country about the propensity of the French to take the law into their own hands? First, British lorries were blockaded in Calais by the French. Then British lambs were burnt by the French. Now our fishing fleet is attacked by the French. Is my hon. Friend aware that, if he takes a tough line on this, he will enjoy the support of my constituents, the House and the nation?

**Mr. Curry:** I am, and I will.

**Madam Speaker:** We must now move on to business questions.

# Business of the House

3.43 pm

**Dr. John Cunningham** (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 29 JUNE—Remaining stages of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill.

TUESDAY 30 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Boundary Commissions Bill.

Motions on the Child Support Regulations and the Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motions on Select Committees related to Government Departments.

WEDNESDAY 1 JULY—Remaining stages of the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill *[Lords]*.

THURSDAY 2 JULY—Debate on the programme of activity and themes of the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 3 JULY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 6 JULY—Opposition day (3rd allotted day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate described as "The Recession in Industry" followed by a debate described as "The Government's Failure to Contain Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

*[Tuesday 30 June*
*Child Support Regulations and*
*Council Tax Benefit Regulations*
*(1) Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations*
*(2) Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations*
*(3) Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations*
*(4) Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment Maintenance Assessments) Regulations*
*(5) Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations.]*

**Dr. Cunningham:** As the House will be interested to learn of the British Government's support for the confirmation of Mr. Jacques Delors in his post, can we be assured that, on the Prime Minister's return from Lisbon, he will make an oral statement explaining exactly his reasons for endorsing Mr. Delors?

I welcome the statement about Select Committees. I congratulate the Leader of the House on taking the necessary steps to change the Standing Orders to allow Select Committees to be established to scrutinise Departments of State, as he has outlined. Will he confirm that, in contradiction to what happened throughout the last Parliament, when his predecessor was in conflict with the Standing Orders, it is the Government's intention, in this Parliament, to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

Will the Leader of the House clarify the Government's position on the Maastricht Bill? Although I welcome the debate that is to be held next Thursday on developments in the European Community under the British presidency, will he reaffirm that the Government intend to publish a statement on the situation with respect to the Maastricht treaty and the Government's Bill relating to it, and that that statement to Parliament, which the Prime Minister pledged some time ago, will be the subject of a separate debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall not engage in further interpretation of the comment made about Mr. Delors by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister a quarter of an hour ago during Question Time; nor will I pre-empt anything that my right hon. Friend might wish to say to the House on his return from Lisbon. I can respond to the hon. Gentleman's serious question—whether there will be a statement on my right hon. Friend's return—by saying that the answer is yes.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's words about the Select Committees, and I am extremely pleased to be able to put the House into the position from which it can pave the way for further progress on this matter. It is the Government's firm intention that a Scottish Select Committee should be established. The Standing Orders already provide for such a Committee, as the hon. Gentleman said. What will be contained in the amendment to the Standing Orders that I shall be laying later today is a proposal to have a Scottish Select Committee of 11 members, rather than 13, which will bring it into line with virtually all the other Select Committees. That in itself is intended as easing the way forward to bringing about the appointment of a Scottish Select Committee.

As to the Maastricht Bill, I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman in a slightly different way from that which he invited me to. He will recall that both the Prime Minister and, subsequently, I said that, before the Government invited the House to make further progress on the Bill, we envisaged a further debate paving the way. That debate is not the debate that I am proposing for next week. The debate that I am proposing for next week is one that I can describe in shorthand terms, without going back over the phrasing that I used earlier, as marking the inauguration of the United Kingdom presidency of the EC, and enabling the House and the Government to discuss that.

**Mr. Peter Brooke** (City of London and Westminster, South): Given the paraphernalia that is attached to the Dispatch Box in the interests of our wider public, will my right hon. Friend, during the coming week, ask his colleagues on the Treasury Bench not to shout because it makes a disagreeable noise for those behind, and perhaps subsequently to have a quiet word with those on the Opposition Front Bench along the same line?

**Mr. Newton:** I am always happy to have a quiet word with those on the Opposition Front Bench, and I usually try to avoid shouting myself. I am sure that all in the Chamber and those who read *Hansard* will have noted my right hon. Friend's suggestion.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): Can the Home Secretary be dragged to the House next week to make a statement explaining why he has issued secret instructions relaxing the primary-purpose rule? Is the Leader of the House aware that Home Office officials have sought to adjourn scores of immigration appeals recently in which spouses, particularly those with British citizen children, are seeking to enter the United Kingdom, for those cases

to be reviewed, the clear implication being that they will not be allowed to enter? Those instructions have been concealed from the House of Commons. They should be made public, and the Home Secretary should explain why he has made those instructions so secret.

**Mr. Newton:** I do not think that you, Madam Speaker, the House or the hon. Gentleman would expect me to undertake to drag my right hon. and learned Friend to the House—apart from anything else, he is bigger than I am. But I shall certainly undertake to draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to his attention.

**Mr. Andrew Hargreaves** (Birmingham, Hall Green): Will my right hon. Friend undertake to include in our schedule a debate on AIDS? He probably reads the newspapers as much as any other hon. Member and will know about the alleged incident involving people in the neighbourhood of my constituency who may have been deliberately infected by a man knowing that he was HIV-positive. Will my right hon. Friend organise such a debate at some stage so that we can examine the legal implications of such an incident?

**Mr. Newton:** I well understand the concern that must be felt by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members, not only those from the relevant part of the midlands. I cannot undertake to provide time for a debate but, if my hon. Friend considered it appropriate, he may wish to seek an Adjournment debate.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): Following the statement made this week by the Secretary of State for Scotland, which appeared to rule out any substantial reform of government in Scotland following the Prime Minister's stocktaking exercise, will the Leader of the House make Government time available next week for Scottish Members to raise on the Floor of the House the Government's abject failure to recognise the democratic demand for a directly elected and powerful Scottish Parliament in Scotland in line with the EC principle of subsidiarity?

**Mr. Newton:** I am clearly not in a position to predict or pre-empt the outcome of my right hon. Friend's stocktaking exercise. My response to the hon. Gentleman's particular point on this occasion would be that, as I witnessed, there was a lively and well-attended Scottish Question Time earlier this week in which the hon. Gentleman participated. Those matters have had a fair airing in the past few days.

**Dr. Michael Clark** (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in anticipation of the debate next Tuesday on Select Committees, 88 hon. Members have signed an early-day motion recommending the retention of the Energy Select Committee? Has my right hon. Friend any plans for any Select Committee announced to the House this afternoon? Will next Tuesday's debate be of an adequate length to allow all views to be aired, will it be in the early hours of the morning or at a sensible time, and will there be a free vote?

**Mr. Newton:** The amendments that I am tabling today provide for the deletion of the Energy Select Committee. That is not unreasonable, because the basic principle on which departmental Select Committees have always operated, and the basis on which I have been pressed to provide Committees in respect of national heritage and science and technology, has always been that they should match Departments, and that is a sensible proposition on which to rest.

With regard to the timing of the debate, perhaps I can rest on further discussions through the usual channels. I cannot give an exact undertaking about the timing of the debate, especially in view of my hon. Friend's hint that he might want it to be a long debate, in which case the timing might in part be in his hands. Similarly, voting is a matter which is best considered in other ways.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House has just described the principle of shadowing Departments. I am sure that Northern Ireland Members hope that that principle will be extended to them.

Can the right hon. Gentleman give us any idea when he expects the Scottish Select Committee to be set up, how many members it will have and whether all Scottish Opposition parties will be represented? He mentioned Scottish Question Time. Will he bear in mind the fact that Scottish Members will not have another opportunity to question Ministers until 21 October? Does he not consider that that is outrageous, and that efforts should be made to set up a Scottish Grand Committee next week—or at least before the House rises—so that questions can be asked?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall fall back on a traditional formula: I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's latter comment to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. As for his earlier questions, as I said earlier, the amendment that I am tabling today will provide for a Scottish Select Committee with 11 members. The details of its membership are, of course, a matter for the Committee of Selection.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): Will the Leader of the House give us a clear assurance that, if the Government do not use their powers to block the reappointment of the President of the European Commission, the proposals for increased expenditure and increased resources for the EC that Mr. Delors has submitted will be available in the Vote Office in time for Thursday's debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot give my hon. Friend such a specific undertaking off the cuff. In any event, it is likely that there will be further discussion of the future financing of the EC—which is, I imagine, what my hon. Friend has in mind—in Lisbon over the weekend, and that will entail examining the position after Lisbon.

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Has the right hon. Gentleman seen my early-day motion 236, which calls for the ring-fencing of community-care functions, and has been strongly supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House?

*[That this House expresses its grave concern that funds for community care will not be specifically allocated in the Revenue Support Grant after April 1993, when local authorities will have clear and specific responsibility for the provision of community care; believes that funds must be targeted if the quantity of services is to increase to meet needs and the quality to meet demands; supports the recommendation of Sir Roy Griffiths for a specific grant to be given to local authorities, as the basis for local funding; notes that a specific grant provides a mechanism for Parliament to scrutinise fairly the performance of local authorities, allows local authorities to plan and develop*

*[Mr. Alfred Morris]*

*services with a guaranteed base of funding, and makes it impossible for local authorities to allow funds for community care to be diverted for any other purpose; notes that Ministers already utilise specific grants for mental illness, and for drug and alcohol abuse; and most strongly urges the Government to announce that the funds for community care after April 1993 will be clearly earmarked.]*

If, as *The Times* reports, we have won and the Government have changed their policy, why cannot the House be told that? When will a statement be made?

**Mr. Newton:** I am not in a position to confirm press reports that the right hon. Gentleman has seen, not all of which I consider to have been completely accurate. He will, however, be aware that, as it happens, the issue of community care will arise in one way or another during the debate on the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill that is scheduled for next Wednesday.

**Mr. James Hill** (Southampton, Test): Has my right hon. Friend had time to read early-day motion 204?

*[That this House notes that on 1st January 1993 there will not be a requirement to customs clear goods in free circulation within the European Community, that the collection of VAT will move from payment at the point of entry to an audit method, similar to that used for domestic transactions and that this change may result in a large number of freight forwarders losing their jobs over night, with estimates currently predicting 3,500 redundancies in the United Kingdom; notes that the Institute of Freight Forwarders and the British International Freight Association do not object to these changes; however, bearing in mind that the loss of jobs is a direct result of a political decision, as opposed to market forces, considers it necessary for further funds to be made available by the Government for retraining and to encourage employees to remain at their posts until the end of the year; and further considers as the Dutch and French Governments have provided funds to assist the forwarding industries in their respective countries, that this is a precedent and the United Kingdom could join in to make the transition period between now and 1st January 1993 as smooth a change over as possible.]*

The motion describes the difficulties that will be faced by the Institute of Freight Forwarders when we enter the single market on 1 January. The institute forecasts 3,500 redundancies in the area involved. Although its members —many of whom are constituents of mine—are not taking an aggressive line, they nevertheless say that the decision has been political rather than commercial. They look to the Government for some form of help, for instance with job training.

**Mr. Newton:** I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. As he will know, however, the Government have already established a wide range of measures to help people who are unfortunate enough to lose their jobs in freight forwarding or any other industry.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): May we have a statement next week about the fiddling of proxy votes down in Cornwall? May we have an assurance that, when that statement is made, we shall be able to consider all the other parts of Britain where—in such places as nursing homes, especially private nursing homes—the Tory party is using agents to fiddle votes left, right and centre? Let us have no more rabbiting on about a citizen's charter while the Tory party, from the very top, is taking people's votes away.

**Mr. Newton:** As the hon. Gentleman is no doubt aware, the allegations to which he has referred are being investigated by the police, who have sent a preliminary report to the Crown prosecution service. I think he will understand that, in the circumstances, I neither can nor should comment further.

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): Having rightly earned the gratitude of the House for his announcement about Select Committees, will my right hon. Friend earn it further by saying when we will debate the Jopling report?

**Mr. Newton:** I can give a pretty clear indication in one sense: the business that I have announced today runs up to 6 July, 10 days before the proposed date of the recess, subject to the progress of business. I have given commitments that we shall debate the Jopling report in that period. That narrows it down. I cannot narrow it down further today.

**Mr. William Ross** (Londonderry, East): Has the right hon. Gentleman read reports in the Northern Ireland press on the imprisonment of an individual for fraud at the De Lorean motor company? Will he arrange for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement to the House next week on that serious fraud and to tell the people of Northern Ireland whether the Government intend to seek the extradition of John De Lorean from the United States to stand trial, since he is alleged to have benefited very much from the fraud?

**Mr. Newton:** That is a pretty direct request that I am asked to transmit to my right hon. and learned Friend, and I shall ensure that it is transmitted.

**Sir Michael Neubert** (Romford): Should we not have an early debate on the need for adequate accommodation to enable Members of Parliament and their staff to deal with, in my experience, the increasing case load of constituency correspondence? Is progress on the new parliamentary building in jeopardy as a result of the setback in the financing of the Jubilee line extension? If so, is not that of direct concern to the House?

**Mr. Newton:** Obviously, matters of accommodation are of concern to the House and I am aware of the pressures that are felt by many Members of Parliament and their secretaries. I am glad, therefore, that this week we have been able to set up the new Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend's comments can, should and will be drawn to its attention.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): Parliamentary scrutiny of the Executive is rapidly disappearing. In the three-month recess, we shall not be able to question the Executive in the House. Privatisation has helped to get rid of the Department of Energy and the Energy Select Committee. Agency agreements mean that hon. Members can no longer ask about a host of matters. We have had to wait ages for Select Committees to be established. Will there be a Select Committee on Northern

Ireland, because under direct rule Northern Ireland Members can investigate matters affecting them only on the Floor of the House?

**Mr. Newton:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not get drawn down the wide paths of the introductory part of his question, but I should like to respond to the latter part of it. The position on a Select Committee on Northern Ireland is fairly well known to the House. In a Government response to the Procedure Committee's report on Select Committees, we said that we see a need for further consideration of the desirability and practicability of such a territorial Committee. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland believes that this is one of a series of complex issues that are best left open for consideration in the broad context of the current political talks. It certainly is not ruled out, but it is felt that it should be pursued in that context.

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the Adjournment debate on Monday night has the slightly romantic title of "Camping by Travellers". It is being initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer). Will he assure me that it will not be just an ordinary Adjournment debate but that much attention will be focused on it, because we are talking not only about Worcestershire but about Dorset, Devon, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and almost every rural county that is now being plagued by these people? The police are being diverted from their proper tasks, and farmers are being put to enormous trouble and expense. Could he please deal with that?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will understand that I can hardly promise to rush through an amendment to Standing Orders to provide for an extension of the usual half-hour Adjournment debate, but I can undertake—I am sure that many Members on both sides of the House would wish me to do so—to underline to the Minister who will reply to the debate the concern that is felt by many Members.

**Mr. Doug Hoyle** (Warrington, North): When will we get the Government's response to the report of the Top Salaries Review Body? Will it be next week? Will the right hon. Gentleman inform the Prime Minister that their response should take the form of a statement to the House and not a reply to a written question?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but beyond that I cannot make a prediction because my right hon. Friend has not yet received the report.

**Mr. Robert Adley** (Christchurch): Madam Speaker, you will have heard my right hon. Friend announce the business for Monday, which is the remaining stages of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill. You may also recall that I have asked my right hon. Friend on several occasions whether a White Paper will be issued before the House finishes debating the Bill, but we have still not received one. Are you aware that we debated the issue in Committee and that the vote was tied, but that you and your colleagues will shortly be called on to choose the amendments for Monday's debate? May I ask you to bear that in mind, and may I ask my right hon. Friend whether the White Paper will appear in time for the House to debate it before we rise for the summer recess?

**Mr. Newton:** I plainly cannot say that the White Paper will arrive before the House is invited to debate the Bill further on Monday, nor am I in a position to give a precise undertaking about the timing of the White Paper, but, clearly, I shall ensure that the Secretary of State for Transport is aware of the way in which my hon. Friend has pressed me again on the issue. However, I had the feeling that a good part of my hon. Friend's question was directed at you, Madam Speaker, rather than at me.

**Mr. Eddie McGrady** (South Down): Is the Leader of the House aware of what must be described as directives issued by the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services to the boards, which will have a devastating effect on health provision in Northern Ireland? In view of the fact that the Minister involved is not a Member of the House, that the consultation period will end before the House reconvenes and that the Minister refuses to meet Members of Parliament to discuss the matter, will he please find time to enable the Northern Irish Members of Parliament to discuss the very dramatic change in health provision in Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Newton:** As the hon. Gentleman will know, there have been substantial opportunities to debate Northern Ireland affairs generally in the past week or two. Nevertheless, I shall draw the request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important to have an early debate on the present size, and diminution in the last decade, of the British merchant fleet, and the defence implications?

**Mr. Newton:** Although I recognise my hon. Friend's concern and the reasons for it, I cannot promise to find Government time for a debate before the recess, but he will be aware that there are usually—and, indeed, will be—significant opportunities for such a debate on the motion for the Adjournment of the House for the summer recess and in Adjournment debates thereafter. My hon. Friend might like to bear them in mind.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Could the Leader of the House assure us that we shall have a statement on Monday at the beginning of the Report stage of the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill, because the legislation is putting the Leeds-Bradford electrification in jeopardy? It is because of the legislation that the Royal Bank of Scotland has said that, although the overhead electrification has been started, it cannot go ahead with the leasing of the rolling stock until it receives guarantees from the Government about future provision. The Government will not give those guarantees, so will the Leader of the House tell us whether there will be a statement? There will be an important meeting in Bradford city hall at 5 pm tomorrow, and we need some means of determining the provision; otherwise, everything will be put in jeopardy and the fault will lie with the Government.

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking about a statement in advance of Monday's debate apart from what I have already said about a statement on the outcome of the Lisbon Council. As I said

*[Mr. Newton]*

last week, the hon. Gentleman has shown considerable ingenuity in these matters and I have no doubt that he will find a way of extracting a comment from the Minister during the debate.

**Mr. Spencer Batiste** (Elmet): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read early-day motion 263?

*[That this House warmly welcomes the establishment of National Music Day on 28th June; and encourages as many people as possible, professionals, amateurs and first timers, to participate in this exciting event.]*

At the same time, is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a grave threat to the teaching of music, especially to primary school children, as a result of the withdrawal of peripatetic music teaching in many parts of the country, including Leeds? Would it be possible to have a debate on that subject at an early date, because so many parents, children and teachers value the teaching of music and do not want it to be threatened?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend may like to remember what I said a few moments ago about the various opportunities that will arise in the next two to three weeks for raising various matters—including, perhaps, the one that he has in mind.

The Government warmly welcome national music day, and hope that the celebrations that take place this weekend will become an annual event.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Have the Government forgotten the situation of the 5,000 or more of our fellow countrymen working in Libya? Next week, will he consider the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), as Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation, to consider at least three orders which the Committee considers should be taken on the Floor of the House? Is that not all the more urgent in view of what some of us learned this morning from Lloyd's of London—that serious people in the insurance market at Lloyd's want a statement to be made before considerable sums are paid out in relation to Lockerbie?

**Mr. Newton:** I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and shall certainly consider his request.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): May I draw to my right hon. Friend's attention a letter in *The Times* written by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport about the outcome of the important EC Council of Transport Ministers in Europe on Monday, which will be of the greatest consequence to the travelling public, to the airlines, and to the future of competition and the regulation of civil air transport within Europe? The Secretary of State for Transport did not make a statement to the House, as he should have done, so will the Leader of the House protect the interests of this place by ensuring that the House has time to debate civil air transport at an early date?

**Mr. Newton:** In all honesty, I must say that it would be difficult to fit in a debate before the recess, alongside all the other matters which the House is interested in debating. However, an opportunity may arise on one of the occasions that I have mentioned. I endorse what I took to be a compliment, at the outset of my hon. Friend's question, on my right hon. Friend's the Secretary of State's achievements at the Council. It was a great achievement on the way to the completion of the single market, especially the aviation package, which will be greatly to the advantage of industry and of consumers and customers in this country.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): Does the Leader of the House recognise the growing concern about the obvious ease with which pension funds can be abused, which was illustrated by the Belling group abuse highlighted this week? Will he say whether the Government will be able to make a statement next week on how they intend to introduce immediate legislation to block those abuses and safeguard pension funds, for the security of the people to whom those funds really belong?

**Mr. Newton:** I understand why the hon. Gentleman raises that matter—for the second time in a few days, I believe. He will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced only three or four weeks ago the setting up of a substantial inquiry into the law and regulations on pension funds. That is the right way to proceed. It will take more than a week or two, but my right hon. Friend has said that it will be pressed ahead with considerable vigour.

**Mr. Simon Coombs** (Swindon): Is my right hon. Friend aware that three of my constituents were killed in a serious motor accident on the A420 at Longcot in south Oxfordshire on Monday afternoon? In view of that, and of the continually rising road toll in this country, will he ask his colleagues in the Department of Transport to come to the House, and will he provide time, for a debate on road safety and the resources available for improving some of the narrow and winding roads that still exist on our main road network?

**Mr. Newton:** I will certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to my hon. Friend's comments. I am sure that I speak for all hon. Members in saying that we join my hon. Friend in expressing sympathy for the relatives of those killed in that awful accident.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): May we have a statement from the Home Secretary early next week on the press reports, especially those which appeared yesterday, that the Cabinet has finally decided that there should be a limited form of parliamentary scrutiny of the Security Service? Is the Leader of the House aware that if, as we hope, such a statement is made before the House rises for the summer recess, many of us will take exception to the fact that the parliamentary scrutiny will be limited and that the committee will be confined to the most senior Privy Councillors on the Back Benches? May we have a debate on the subject?

**Mr. Newton:** Like the hon. Gentleman, I have noted the speculation, but I cannot make further comment about it.

**Mr. Jimmy Wray** (Glasgow, Provan): Would the Leader of the House consider persuading the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Scotland to come clean on the reports and controversy surrounding the secret meetings between the Scottish Office, Ofwat and CitNat regarding the idea of setting up six boards to take over and to privatise the Scottish water industry?

**Mr. Newton:** For once, one of the intended recipients of the endless messages I pass—the Secretary of State for the Environment—is sitting beside me and can receive this message directly. I will ensure that it is also transmitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

**Mr. Gordon McMaster** (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate or even a statement on the case of the British nuclear test veterans? Is he aware that I recently received a reply from the Prime Minister in which he stated that he was now ready sympathetically to consider a claim for compensation? There has been further press speculation this week that the Government will change their minds after so long. Does the Leader of the House not think that it is time that the ever-diminishing number of veterans and the ever-increasing number of widows got justice?

**Mr. Newton:** I will draw the attention of my relevant right hon. Friends to the hon. Gentleman's point.

**Mr. John Hutton** (Barrow and Furness): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 310, which has the support of almost 100 of my hon. Friends?

*[That this House notes with concern the findings of the Report by the National Citizens' Advice Bureaux into the employment rights of pregnant women; and calls upon the Government to provide effective protection against dismissal to all pregnant women, irrespective of how long they have been employed, and to approve The Pregnant Women at Work Directive at the Council of Ministers meeting on Wednesday 24th June.]*

In light of the publication this week of both the report by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the annual report by the Equal Opportunities Commission, does the Leader of the House agree that next week would be an appropriate time for a debate, in Government time, on the important issues raised in both reports?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman will, I think, know that the Government made a commitment in the Conservative party manifesto to strengthen the rights of pregnant women in the workplace, and we will seek to do that in appropriate ways. I cannot promise a debate next week.

**Mr. John Austin-Walker** (Woolwich): In view of the Government's declared commitment to Europe, the correspondence received from the European Commissioner for the Environment and the Prime Minister's statement in Rio and in the House in support of species conservation, will the Leader of the House find time next week or at least before the recess to discuss early-day motion 68?

*[That this House expresses concern that the Secretary of State for Transport appears to be willing to press ahead with the construction of the East London River Crossing and the destruction of the 8,000 year-old Oxleas Wood, a site of special scientific interest; calls for a halt to such plans; and demands a full environmental impact assessment of the proposals in accordance with the European Directive.]*

That would allow the House to take a decision which might stop this country falling foul of European environmental protection legislation.

**Mr. Newton:** The reason why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is sitting beside me is that we are about to have the second full day's debate on Rio in two or three weeks. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is pushing his luck in asking for further time. I suspect that he may find an opportunity to make his point in the next few hours.

**Mr. Andrew MacKinlay** (Thurrock): Have any of the right hon. and hon. Friends of the Leader of the House complained to him about the inadequate time given last week to debating the Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1992? The debate was dominated by Ministers and Front-Bench Members. Will the Leader of the House find time before the recess to have a general debate on discipline in the armed services in which some of us who signed an early-day motion may be able to broach the subject of the 307 brave British soldiers who were executed in the 1914-18 war and for whom we now seek a posthumous pardon?

**Mr. Newton:** I do not think that I can give the undertaking that the hon. Gentleman seeks, but it sounds like another of the subjects for which an opportunity might be found by a little ingenuity on his part within the next fortnight.

## Points of Order

4.19 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that, during Prime Minister's Question Time, I had Question No. 5 to the Prime Minister, in which I asked a question about London's homeless. There was a great deal of noise when the Prime Minister replied, so you may not have heard his answer properly. It seemed to me that he got lost somewhere outside London while giving the answer. The question was about London's homeless, but the Prime Minister chose to tell the House about Salford and Manchester. Could you advise me on the best means of getting the Prime Minister to answer a question about the problem of London's homeless? That was my question.

**Madam Speaker:** The best advice that I can give the hon. Gentleman is to apply again to put a question to the Prime Minister. Better luck next time.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Should we not thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing business questions to run their full span?

**Madam Speaker:** The only thing that I can say in answer to that is that, if hon. Members co-operate by putting questions briskly, and the Lord President co-operates in answering, I am keen to call Back Benchers at business questions. I thank the hon. Gentleman.

### BILL PRESENTED

ADOPTION OF ROADS (COMPULSORY PROCEDURES)

Mr. John Hutton presented a Bill to make provision for the compulsory adoption of certain unadopted roads; to make consequential amendments of the law; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 November 1992 and to be printed. [Bill 46.]

## Earth Summit

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*[Relevant documents: The Second Report from the Environment Committee, Session 1990-91, Visit by the Committee to Brazil, HC 60, the Third Report from the Environment Committee, Session 1990-91, Climatological and Environmental Effects of Rainforest Destruction, HC 24, and the Government's Reply thereto, Cm. 1579.]*

**Madam Speaker:** May I inform the House that many hon. Members want to speak in the debate. Therefore, I have had to impose a 10-minute time limit between 7 pm and 9 pm. May I ask those who speak outside that time to show some voluntary restraint in order to be helpful in allowing all those who wish to speak to be called?

4.20 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Howard):** Just over three weeks ago I stood at this Dispatch Box on the day the Earth summit in Rio began. At that time I set out to the House in detail our goals for that conference and the work that the United Kingdom Government had been doing to achieve those goals.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister told the House on his return from Rio of the real success that had been achieved. The summit was far more successful than many had thought possible. That was due in no small part to the leading role played by the Government in the preparatory meetings leading up to the conference and in the negotiatons that took place during it.

I should like today to set out in some detail not only the achievements of the summit but the way in which we see things moving forward. Rio began an evolutionary process. We are committed to sustaining the momentum of that process.

Let us start with the summit itself. Some dismissed it as a failure before it began, but it was the largest-ever gathering of world leaders. The level of commitment was clearly demonstrated by the unprecedented number of signatures on the two major conventions, less than 10 days after they were opened for signing: 153 states and the Economic Community in each case. The personal commitment of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the success of the summit was clear from the outset when he became one of the first world leaders to announce his firm intention to attend. He carried that forward by persuading his G7 colleagues of its importance. His speech at the summit gave a clear international lead on many of the most vital issues before the conference.

One of the most important achievements of the conference was the framework convention on climate change. It took 16 months to negotiate and provides a significant first step in the global response to climate change. It commits countries to devise measures to combat climate change and to report on those measures. It also commits all developed countries to take measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The convention is a sensible precautionary response to a problem the full extent of which is as yet unknown.

Albert Schweitzer said:

"Man has lost the capacity to foresee and forestall. He will end by destroying the earth."

Our scientists have foreseen what could happen if we take no action. We are taking action to prevent damage on the scale which some predict.

As our knowledge improves—

**Mrs. Ann Taylor** (Dewsbury): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Howard:** Perhaps I can develop my argument, then I shall give way.

As our knowledge improves we may need to make further commitments. The convention provides for a strong review process to assess the effectiveness of the action being taken and the need for further action. Some people have criticised the convention for being weak, or of having been watered down to suit the United States, but the commitment to take measures is not weak. Nor is the commitment to report on the effect that the measures are having and to monitor progress towards the targets. The convention is strong, and I believe that it will be effective. All the major economic powers are on board. If one is engaged in an evolutionary process, as we are, it is essential to involve as many people as possible in that process. Involving the US Government in the process was crucial. The US contributes nearly a quarter of total world $CO_2$ emissions and it is some vindication of involving the US that President Bush, with other world leaders, has called for rapid implementation of the convention. We have joined in that call. We are pressing for early ratification of the convention and we are already taking action to implement it. We have placed in the House Library a document setting out our initial strategy on limiting $CO_2$ emissions, and are urging all developed countries to join us in our commitment to publish full national programmes by the end of next year.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** The Minister will be aware that concern still exists about the clarity of the Government's commitment to stabilisation of $CO_2$ emissions by 2000. The convention says, and the Prime Minister said in his statement, that the United Kingdom will make that commitment, provided that others do so as well. We know that the Americans will not treat that as a binding target. What exactly is the Government's position?

**Mr. Howard:** The Government's position has been made absolutely clear on many occasions. The hon. Lady seems not to understand that, with what is undoubtedly a global problem of this kind, one needs a global response if it is to be effective. If the United Kingdom Government engaged in unilateral action it would achieve nothing—no more than would have been achieved if the United Kingdom had engaged in the unilateral action on nuclear disarmament so vigorously urged upon us by Opposition Members. The proper way forward is multilateral action —a global response to a global problem.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Howard:** I am answering the hon. Lady's question. In this case the distinction is academic, because we know that other countries will take similar action.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): What about the United States?

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Lady asked a question. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who is

to wind up the debate, seems unable to restrain himself from making comments from a sedentary position, and asks about the United States.

The United States has committed itself to a comprehensive series of measures which will—of themselves and without taking into account further action that the United States Government and the state governments intend to take—bring them within a whisker of achieving what the convention commits the United States Government to.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor** *rose*——

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. lady is going to reply to my speech. I would give way, but I do not think that it would be fair to the House to turn the debate into a dialogue.

At Rio, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced an initiative to ensure that developing countries can share the benefits of environmentally sound technology, through partnership with British companies. Called the technology partnership initiative, it will promote United Kingdom capacity in environmentally friendly technologies, and promote those technologies in overseas markets. It will play an important part in providing developing countries with the technology that they need to play their part in implementing the convention.

The main focus of the initiative will be a global technology partnership conference and exhibition of United Kingdom technology early next year. It is not merely very high-tech technologies that will be shared. I have recently had meetings with the Environment Ministers of both India and Pakistan. A major concern for both of them is the provision of clean drinking water. In the United Kingdom we have tremendous expertise in that area, and tremendous experience in making it relevant and appropriate for local circumstances in countries overseas. Our initiative is designed to bring the expertise and the need together.

The United Kingdom Government also signed the convention on biological diversity. Before Rio few people know what biological diversity was. The extensive press coverage of the Earth summit has changed all that. The conservation of biodiversity is now widely recognised to be important in both economic and ethical terms.

That convention is important not only because of its subject matter, but because of what it attempts to do by way of forging partnership between north and south. It will help the benefits of biological resources to be shared equitably between the countries in which they grow and the countries that develop them. Countries will be required to identify and monitor important species and to set up networks of protected areas to safeguard them. That requirement applies to developed countries as well as to those still developing. It applies to us. It will be harder, of course, for many other countries, particularly those near the equator where the greatest diversity of species occur, and where administrative structures are not as sophisticated as ours. So the convention offers help to such countries to devise national plans which meet their own particular national needs as well as safeguarding the biodiversity of the planet.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): By what mechanism will we monitor our situation? Why was no one from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Dr. O'Connor or anyone else on the delegation to Rio?

**Mr. Howard:** We sent a large delegation to Rio, which comprised many representatives of non-governmental organisations. It also included the hon. Gentleman's colleague, the shadow spokesman on overseas development, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it was not possible to accommodate everyone. We take seriously the involvement of non-governmental organisations, not only in our delegation at Rio, but in our continuing work to take forward the process that was decided upon at Rio.

The House will recall that when we last debated the Earth summit the Government were still considering the text of the convention. In common with other OECD donor countries, we had reservations about the financial provisions. We were concerned that the developed countries might be put in the position of providing financial support with a blank cheque. We studied the text carefully and we are now confident that the difficulties can be overcome. We will continue to play a leading role in promoting the convention, and we have offered to host the first meeting of the conference of the parties to the biodiversity convention.

We are also taking follow-up action through the Darwin initiative for the survival of species, which the Prime Minister announced in his speech at Rio. That will build on the United Kingdom's recognised scientific and commercial strengths in biodiversity. Our centres of excellence are renowned throughout the world. They include the Royal Botanic gardens at Kew and Edinburgh, and the natural history museum, where, yesterday in the presence of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I launched three publications on biodiversity. One of those publications was compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, another of our centres of excellence.

**Mr. Dalyell:** What is the educational element of the Darwin initiative? Will the fact that the Royal Botanic gardens in Edinburgh is to start an MSc course on biodiversity and tropical rain forests this October to be taken into account? Surely the directors of the institutions named should have been told about the initiative before it was launched rather than learning about it from the press.

**Mr. Howard:** My understanding is that they were informed. There may be some misunderstanding about what happened in relation to the Royal Botanic gardens at Edinburgh. My office attempted to communicate with the other institutions that I mentioned and, as far as I am aware, those attempts were successful. There may have been some misunderstanding in the case of Edinburgh.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that the initiative will contain a large educational component, because we believe that that is an important way in which to take that initiative forward. The hon. Gentleman was present yesterday when I invited all those who think that they can play a significant and instructive part in taking it forward to get in touch with my Department so that we can assess the contribution that they can make. That applies as much to institutions in Edinburgh as to institutions anywhere in the country. I look forward to hearing from the institutions to which the hon. Gentleman referred so that we can make a proper assessment of the contribution that they can make.

The initiative will involve international studies of available natural resources, the development of inventories of the most important species and the promotion of

*[Mr. Howard]*

exchange of information and techniques for conservation. The next step, which we are already taking, is to develop the initiative in consultation with interested public and private sector organisations, and it was in that context that I issued the invitation to which I referred.

In addition to the conventions, agreement was reached on the Rio declaration and on Agenda 21. The Rio declaration is a statement of principles, balancing environmental concerns with the need for development. Many of those principles will be familiar to hon. Members —the polluter pays and the precautionary principles, for instance. Equally importantly, the declaration endorses the need for citizen participation, for providing access to environmental information, and for the use of environmental impact assessment. We believe that all those principles are essential. The declaration also meets concerns of developing countries by underlining the link between poverty and environmental degradation, and acknowledging the sovereignty of states in environmental and development policies. It was accepted unanimously by all countries represented at Rio, and will provide a useful basis for common action in the years to come.

Agenda 21, which was also agreed at the conference, provides a framework of action for everyone. It provides a flexible approach over 40 different subject areas for countries developing their own sustainable development programmes. A plan of action that is right for a small African state is unlikely to be appropriate for somewhere like Canada. That is why the flexible approach is so important. But sustainable development is not just something for Governments. It is for industry, for voluntary organisations, for local government, for scientists, for academics and for the individual. Agenda 21 aims to integrate environmental concerns into a wide range of policies.

Among all those undoubted successes of Rio, I do have to report one disappointment. We had hoped to achieve a commitment to work towards a binding agreement on forests, but in the end we had to settle for a declaration on forest principles.

The inability to reach agreement does not reflect any lack of effort. The talks in which I was engaged went on well into the small hours, but in the end we had to recognise the need to draw up proposals with some degree of flexibility to meet the concerns of all states. Only last week, for example, the Indian Minister for the Environment emphasied to me the importance of forests as a source of firewood for cooking, apart from timber. Such concerns cannot be ignored.

However, the declaration lays down substantial undertakings, and it is the first international consensus on the value and conservation of the world's forests. That is not the end of the story, for the door remains open to a forest convention at a later date. The United Kingdom sponsors more than 200 forestry projects overseas at a cost of more than £160 million. We are pledged to continue that programme.

**Mr. Dalyell:** On 12 July, Mr. Ron Kemp and a delegation go to Malaysia. What is their brief? What do they hope to achieve? I accept that they could achieve a great deal.

**Mr. Howard:** It is hoped to take forward the principles agreed in Rio. It is well known that Malaysia and India were the two countries which took the lead in opposing, for the type of reasons that I gave, a binding declaration. They took strong positions on those issues. In the end we were successful in obtaining their assent to the declaration of principles that was achieved at Rio, and it is important that we discuss with them the most constructive way in which that statement can be taken forward.

As anyone could have predicted, there was a great deal of debate in Rio on financial issues. Developing countries will need help, in different ways, if they are to achieve these new patterns of sustainable development. The single most important help that we can give is an improvement in the world trading system. We must have a successful conclusion of the Uruguay round of GATT if the economies of developing countries are to have the opportunities for growth that they need. And environment and trade are policies which must increasingly go hand in hand. That theme ran through the corridors of Rio.

The United Kingdom Government have led the way on debt relief. We have relieved developing countries of £1 billion of old aid loans since 1979 and we are urging the international community to build on a new set of Trinidad terms.

The United Kingdom will also mobilise its aid programme in support of the goals of Agenda 21. We are planning to make available substantial financial resources over the next few years to assist forestry conservation, biodiversity, energy efficiency, population planning and sustainable agriculture.

We fully support the global environment facility as the channel for assistance to meet the incremental costs arising from countries' commitments under the two new conventions. We have proposed a $2 billion to $3 billion replenishment of that facility and are committed to contributing our fair share. That share will depend on the final size of the replenishment and arrangements for sharing the burden among donors. We estimate that it will be about £100 million. That fulfils the pledge of new and additional resources for the GEF made by my predecessor in New York in March.

We are already playing our part in the provision of 3 billion ecu by the EC and its member states to strengthen assistance to developing countries in the field of sustainable development, particularly for funding Agenda 21.

It was very encouraging that we were able to reach so many agreements in Rio. But agreements alone are not enough. They must be translated into action, and that action must be monitored and reviewed. That was why the Earth summit agreed the establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission. That will pursue the follow-up to UNCED commitments and act as a forum for continuing discussion of sustainable development issues. It is crucial that Governments and United Nations organisations report periodically and publicly on implementation. Public confidence must be maintained and, to achieve that, we need the involvement of all types of non-governmental organisations—NGOs—business and the scientific community, as well as of local government.

The Government attach great importance to that monitoring process, which is why we have decided to convene a major global forum of the NGO community to examine and clarify their role in the practical implications

of Agenda 21. We were in constant touch with NGOs during the preparations for Rio and were fortunate to have the expert knowledge of about a dozen NGO representatives as part of the United Kingdom delegation. We do not want to lose their input in this vital post-UNCED phase.

On his return from Rio, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to his European Community and G7 colleagues proposing the adoption of our action plan to carry forward immediately the agreements reached at Rio. We expect discussion of that initiative at the forthcoming Lisbon Council and Munich summit.

We propose that, at those meetings, leaders should make a political commitment to an eight-point plan for follow-up action by their countries by the end of 1993. That would include the publication of national plans for implementing the Rio declaration, Agenda 21, the forestry principles and the climate change convention, and action on biodiversity. It also includes taking the lead at the UN General Assembly in the establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission, putting our weight behind a review process for the forestry principles and giving financial support for the implementation of Agenda 21 through the Overseas Development Administration and for the replenishment of the global environment facility.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** What is the Secretary of State's view on the reporting mechanism to the United Nations Assembly with regard to the Sustainable Development Commission and progress? When the Minister for the Environment and Countryside was in Rio, he said that it would be totally unacceptable and that he would consider it a failure if the reporting mechanism were through the UN Economic and Social Council, which is exactly what was decided at the end. Since that is what has happened, what is the Secretary of State's position now?

**Mr. Howard:** It is fairly obvious that sustainable development will take place through the Sustainable Development Commission. Governments will report to that commission. We do not yet know exactly what form those reports will take, but it is interesting that, when I met the Indian Environment Minister last week, he suggested, quite unprompted, that the annual reporting system that we have introduced in this country in the past two years —it was originally introduced by Chris Patten—should form a model for international reporting on those agreements, which other nations might want to use. So he sees the merit of what we have been doing in this country and regards it as a potential model for the way forward in international reporting.

The Earth summit caught the attention of people throughout the world. It has caused an irreversible change in the perception of environmental issues and has placed the environment firmly on the political agenda.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The Minister referred to relieving developing countries of £1 billion worth of official debt. Does that include debt incurred for the purchase of military equipment? The statistic may not be so relevant if that is the case.

**Mr. Howard:** The initiative was directed towards relieving the poorest countries in the world of their debt. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would want those countries to be relieved of that debt so that they could get away from the situation that is often rightly complained about—that those countries must devote a large proportion of their scarce resources to interest payments on that debt. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would warmly welcome that.

I have little doubt that our children, looking back on the events at Rio, will recognise the significance of the momentous decisions taken there. Oliver Goldsmith's lugubrious philosopher told us

> "How terrible it will be when the motions of all the planets have at last become so irregular as to need repairing, when the . . . earth, deviating from its ancient track . . . shall become so eccentric, that . . . it shall fly off into boundless space."

The problems of the earth have not reached those extremes, but we should not be complacent about our successes so far.

We must ensure that UNCED is not just an event in the history books, but a milestone on the road to the future health and well-being of our planet. I believe that, in the fullness of time, that is precisely how it will be seen. I commend its outcome to the House.

4.43 pm

**Mrs. Ann Taylor** (Dewsbury): It is right and appropriate that we should have a debate about UNCED, about our hopes about what decisions made at the Earth summit may lead to, and also about our fears of whether agreements made match up to the scale of the global, environmental and development problems that we face. It is also fortuitous that we should have the debate as soon as possible after the Rio conference. I hope that that would have happened had we not had the vacuum in House of Commons business following the Danish referendum. Be that as it may, it would be churlish of me not to welcome the fact that we are having the debate today.

The Secretary of State told us about the build up to Rio. We should all pay tribute to Maurice Strong, the general secretary of UNCED, whose tireless energy and, above all, determination that the conference would not be allowed to fail was essential to the progress that was made—limited though it was in all too many respects.

In their statements, the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister could have been a little more gracious to those who addressed the issues long before the Rio summit was organised. The Prime Minister has frequently said that the Earth summit in Rio was to be seen as the process of starting to save the world. Due credit should be given to those who came to the issues 20 years or more ago, and people such as those responsible for the Brundtland commission should get the credit for the work that they did in placing such matters on the political agenda. The position of those issues was perhaps not as high on the list as many of us would have liked, but the achievements of such people should be recognised by all hon. Members.

I shall mention some issues on which we agree before questioning the Minister further about whether or not the opportunities for progress were maximised at Rio, and about what he and the Government intend to do to put their own house in order. I agree that bringing together world leaders to discuss the issues was, in itself, a step forward. It was progress not least because it resulted in the leaders, as well as the public, realising the scale of the problems facing us. The Ministers were right to go to Rio, right to sign the conventions that were agreed—although, as I shall show shortly, I remain convinced that more could

*[Mrs. Ann Taylor]*

have been achieved and British Ministers could have played a more positive role, particularly in respect of global warming and the aid target.

Since his return from Rio, the Secretary of State has said that the experience had a tremendous impact on him; I hope that that impact is deep and remains with him. It is about time that someone in Government began to take the issues seriously. The Secretary of State has acknowledged that there must be intervention to ensure global environmental protection, which is certainly true. The market will not solve the problems of global warming, the loss of biodiversity or deforestation. Sustainable development requires planning and intervention.

Despite the recession that the Minister of State sees as such a barrier and as an excuse for not doing more, we in Britain are in a position to do more and to give a lead. I want the Government to make progress, not only to fulfil their international obligations following the Rio summit. That would not be enough, as in Rio too much was too vague. I hope to convince the Secretary of State that, if we take a lead, it will be in this country's interests as well as in our environmental interests.

There are probably three ways of considering this country's role in global environmental protection. We could set ourselves the target of being an example of best practice, proving to others what can be done to protect our environment and taking initiatives to help ensure that the poorer countries are allowed and encouraged to develop in a way that does not repeat the mistakes which industrialised countries, including us, made in the past and which resulted in environmental damage.

We bear a significant responsibility for the global environmental problems that we face today. We must play our full part in alleviating those problems and helping others to pay greater heed to the environmental threat. That should be our ideal. We should push our domestic actions to the limit, have the strictest standards and controls, and the belief that, regardless of what others do or do not do, we will have the best record based on the precautionary principle. We should understand that it is often in the country's economic interests as well as its environmental interests to prevent pollution and preserve resources. I think that the Minister still fails to appreciate that.

It is cheaper to prevent pollution than to clean up after the event. We have seen that time and time again, including the recent event in which the Department of the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry were involved—the Wheal Jane incident in the south-west. Even if pollution problems can be dealt with, much destruction will have taken place in the meantime, and the financial costs—let alone the personal and environmental damage—will be great.

An alternative and less idealistic way of considering our approach to environmental problems is to set our targets according to what other countries are doing and stating that we shall match the best. We could adopt the belief that, whatever targets our neighbours—comparable countries—come up with, we shall run with the leaders. That may not be so idealistic, but it should be a practical way of assessing our performance and providing ourselves with basic objectives.

A third option would be to say that we can and will take action, but only if and when others do likewise. We could say that we shall not fall behind the worst. I think that such an attitude is totally unacceptable.

The Government's position on all the crucial environmental protection issues does not fall into the category of the third option. However, I believe that in some critical issues the Government are hiding behind the fact that some countries are even worse than us. Even when we agree, in principle, to action, we still face the problem of funding the programmes required. I do not think that the Minister has dealt with that matter adequately, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will wish to return to it later.

Exchanging statistics may not take us much further forward, but the United Nations' target for aid on which we are all supposed to agree is 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. In 1979, when the Labour Government left office, the figure was 0·51 per cent. and rising. That was the nearest that this country has ever come to achieving the target figure. However, more recently, under the Conservatives, the figure has fallen to 0·27 per cent. and is only now to rise to 0·31 per cent.—an increase which no one could do other than welcome, but which still leaves us much further behind than we were in 1979.

One of the problems fundamental to the Government's outlook is that they consider only the cost of their programme, never the cost of inaction. That is a significant failing, which means that the necessary long-term decisions are not being taken and, as a result, we are storing up future problems.

The Secretary of State raised some specific issues. The convention on climate change was one of the most important subjects to be addressed at the Rio conference. I understand that the wording of the convention was finalised in early May, when a decision was made to remove any concrete targets or timetable for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. That led to the Secretary General of the United Nations, speaking at the opening of the convention for signing the declaration, to say that the convention fell short of the hopes of many people.

**Mr. Howard:** I cannot believe that the hon. Lady has not read the text of the convention, which clearly contains both targets and timetables. The target is to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The word used is "aim", which is exactly what one does at a target. A timetable is set in that the aim is to be achieved by the year 2000—that is what the convention says.

**Mrs. Taylor:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman still does not understand the problem facing the many people who want the Government to be clearer in their language. There should be clear targets and binding commitments—[HON. MEMBERS: "There are."] But the whole reason for altering the wording was to get President Bush to the conference table——

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Lady is sliding away from the point. Whatever criticisms she may make of the convention, will she accept that it does contain a target and a timetable?

**Mrs. Taylor:** If the target and timetable depend on everyone else doing likewise, they do not represent binding

or clear commitments, because if everyone else does not do likewise, Governments who want to be let off the hook will be let off it—perhaps including the British Government.

**Mr. Cynog Dafis** (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): A great deal has been made of the issue whether the year 2000 is a satisfactory date by which to aim for the stabilisation of emissions, but the important thing is the stabilisation of concentrations in the atmosphere. It has been claimed that we need a large reduction in emissions to bring about that stabilisation, so the aim itself is unsatisfactory.

**Mrs. Taylor:** I am sure that many people share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. If the Minister is so happy with what happened at Rio and believes that it created the best possible framework, why did the Prime Minister say on his return:

"The United Kingdom has been able to go further than the convention requires by making a firm commitment, provided others do so as well, to reduce emissions of $CO_2$ and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the year 2000"?—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 649.]

That is not a binding commitment; it is not considered a clear target by the United States, so it does not carry a great deal of weight.

At the conference in Rio, a group of countries, led by some EC members but also by others, including Austria and Switzerland, tried to obtain support for a parallel convention signed by countries willing to commit themselves to a clear target of stabilisation at 1990 levels by the year 2000—regardless of what other countries do. The Minister did not feel able to go along with that. If he is so sure that his commitment cannot be faulted, why was not he willing to go along with the parallel convention, which leaves no doubt about what those countries are aiming for? Perhaps he will tell us now why that was not possible——

**Mr. Howard:** The European Community as a whole was not prepared to go along with the initiative—it was quite shortlived and then fizzled out—because it took the view that the most effective way of dealing with these matters was by a convention that brought everyone on board. We are already seeing the fruits of that approach —countries are committing themselves to taking early action and are producing early reports. That was considered better than creating differences between one group of countries and another—that would have been a divisive approach. It is why we and the European Community thought it much more effective to take action through the convention which 153 countries have signed.

**Mrs. Taylor:** The Secretary of State talks as if the parallel convention would have threatened the main convention that everyone was there to sign. On the contrary, it would have represented a clear sign of commitment by countries wanting to ensure that the whole world realised that their aim of stabilisation by the year 2000 was unequivocal. I hope that the Minister, perhaps on some other occasion, will go further and say that, regardless of what other countries do, this country believes that it should stabilise emissions by the year 2000.

The Labour party and other Opposition parties have been advocating this target for some time. Had Ministers accepted it when we first promoted it, we would have been in a much stronger position to meet it today. As it is, we must face the staggering fact that, while there has been a reduction in our GNP in the past two years, there has been an increase in the amount of carbon dioxide emissions from energy use—an increase in greenhouse gases even during a long and deep recession.

We need to examine carefully what needs to be done to make some progress and to put in place real targets, understandable to all. We need a clear lead from the Government so that industry, local authorities and people will realise that much can be achieved and that the target that has been set is both achievable and in this country's interests. Unless Ministers give a clear lead on this, people will not understand that the aim is a positive one, not just a restriction of their activities.

I hope that the Minister will produce plans to convince people of the need and financial wisdom of making the changes required to stabilise emissions of greenhouse gases. Until now, the lead given by Ministers has not been significant. There have been some token gestures, but nothing constituting a significant programme.

Some measures could make a difference in a very short time. Top of the list must be a new emphasis on energy conservation and efficiency. Big private and public companies which have conducted energy audits, and local authorities which have had sufficient resources to look into the problem, have been amazed by the savings that they have been able to make. In many parts of the country, local authorities have taken their own initiatives and found necessary and significant savings by altering their pattern of energy consumption, often without Government help.

The Government could introduce a list of measures costing little or nothing but, once taken together, making a significant contribution to tackling the United Kingdom's contribution to global warming. I shall suggest some of them to the Minister in the hope that he will take them seriously. There is no reason why they should be the cause of political division.

First, all authorisations under the integrated pollution control section of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 should be granted only if they meet energy-use targets, making sure that industry is always using the best technology possible, and using the granting of authorisations to turn the screw on industry and force it to help itself. Often industry will not carry out the required energy audits by itself. Each sector of industry should be given a target for energy efficiency. Government Departments have done some work on this; some plans have been drawn up; but no action has been taken.

Recently, the Department issued changed building regulations, but there was no revision to take account of what could be achieved by better energy efficiency conditions. If the Minister wants to help the environment and the construction industry, why not allow local authorities to use part of the capital receipts which he will apparently not release for new building to invest in home insulation and energy efficiency measures? None of these measures need be a cause for political division. They are common-sense ways of making progress, and I hope that the Minister will take note of them.

It is not just the Labour party which is concerned. The Advisory Council for Business and the Environment and the CBI have both been asking the Government for clearer targets. The Government should not just sit on the fence and regard such moves as intervention and therefore something which, for ideological reasons, they are not willing to do. We must have actions that match the scale of the problems we face.

*[Mrs. Taylor]*

The other convention that received much attention in the immediate pre-signing days at the Rio conference was that on biological diversity. Whether the "will we, won't we sign the convention" attitude taken by the Government was intended to create media hype or whether Ministers had genuine doubts, we shall never know. Those at the conference seemed to think that it was the intention to sign all along, and so it should have been. The United States refused to sign, apparently bowing to pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, and we welcome the fact that the British Government have signed the convention.

The Prime Minister in his statement on his return from Rio and the Secretary of State today have told us of some of the measures that they intend to take as a result of UNCED—the Darwin initiative, the development of partnership in global technology, which is essential if we are not to deny poor countries the benefits of the latest technology, and the idea of the global forum to build on the role of the non-governmental organisations. I agree with the Secretary of State that the role of NGOs in helping to concentrate the minds of Ministers and civil servants and to keep up the pressure in Rio was important. The initiatives announced so far do not add up to a programme that matches the scale of the problems we face. More importantly, they do not address the balance of damage that has been done and is being done—damage that could be prevented by Government action.

The Secretary of State has described the biodiversity convention as providing a platform for individual countries to develop and implement broadly based conservation strategies and programmes, and to build up a network of protected areas. I agree with that interpretation, and it is a fine objective. What worries me is the unnecessary and avoidable destruction of habitats that should be protected in this country. These include places such as Thorne and Hatfield moors and Wedhome flow, identified by English Nature as three of the most important peatland sites of scientific interest, which are threatened by commercial exploitation. These sites should be designated as Ramsar sites, and there should be a moratorium on peat digging, but Ministers have sanctioned the wholesale destruction of these fragile ecosystems, which have significant value in terms of the convention that the Secretary of State has signed.

In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes), the Prime Minister recently admitted that he was not aware of the destruction of these sites. Therefore, what will the Secretary of State do now, following the signing of the biodiversity convention? What will he do to protect Britain's rare species of plants and animals, including those on these SSSIs?

What action will the Minister take with regard to the Government's policy on SSSIs in general? Only today, we learned that the Department of Transport plans to widen the M25 from eight to 14 lanes, mainly on green belt land and through three areas of outstanding natural beauty. That one proposal threatens 26 SSSIs. If the Government are serious about their responsibilities on biodiversity, will the Secretary of State tell the House what he said to the Secretary of State for Transport about these plans, assuming that he was consulted?

**Mr. John Owen Jones** (Cardiff, Central): In addition to the preservation of those SSSIs and areas of outstanding natural beauty that we still have, does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should be considering, possibly as part of our problem with the over-production of food, using marginal agricultural land to reafforest parts of Great Britain? We have lost over half of our forests in the past 45 years. Instead of simply criticising under-developed countries for destroying their forests, perhaps we should set a positive example by recreating some of the forests that once graced this land. Within that forest, we could reintroduce some species that have become extinct on this island. That would be a positive step.

**Mrs. Taylor:** My hon. Friend is right. We can take a great many positive steps. One of the failures of the Government is that they have turned their back on those matters and left too much to the market. As to losing forest and woodlands, my hon. Friend touches on a sensitive point, because in the last week we have learnt that a wood in my constituency is threatened. The procedure of consultation with the Forestry Commission over the granting of the licence is inadequate. The Minister should be giving more protection there as well. Furthermore, nearly 1,000 SSSIs have been damaged in the past five years according to English Nature. I hope that that is not a record that the Secretary of State considers to be satisfactory.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I am pleased that my hon. Friend mentioned the proposals to widen the M25. Does she agree that, in order to meet the carbon dioxide emissions policy that the Government have announced, they will have to have a radical look at transport policy? That would mean stopping the road building programme in favour of putting more money into public transport and more fuel-efficient forms of transport than the private car, which is the least efficient form of transport in the world.

**Mrs. Taylor:** The cuts that the Government have made in public transport programmes have not only affected people's life styles but have damaged the environment. Many of the early statements of the new Secretary of State for Transport have been extremely worrying, because they show that, for yet more years to come, the Government will be dominated by the roads lobby. That is not a healthy trend—I mean that quite literally.

My hon. Friend's point relates to another problem about which I wanted to ask the Secretary of State. What does he intend to do about incorporating into domestic legislation the EC directive on environmental impact assessments? When he came to his new office, did he look afresh at the other areas threatened by road development, such as Oxleas wood and Twyford down? Those are two places of great significance where problems have been created, leading to Great Britain appearing in the European Court.

The environmental impact assessment directive is extremely important, and if the Minister is serious about helping other countries to preserve the biodiversity of their areas, he needs to do more to put his house in order.

Agenda 21 is central to the concept of countries developing their own sustainable development programme. Again, there is potentially great progress to be made here, but the extent of progress will depend on political will.

The idea of a Sustainable Development Commission in the United Kingdom was put forward by some of the participants at Rio, and that is to be welcomed. The proposal for an environment protection commission, which the Opposition has advocated for many years, would have fulfilled many of those functions.

One of the main differences between the Opposition and the Government, even after the Government's conversion to an environment agency of some sort—we still do not know what—is that the Government tend to see their role in environmental protection in a limited and policing way, whereas we want a technical administration with an environment protection executive but with a wider ranging proactive commission bringing together scientists, industry, local authorities and NGOs.

It is no use looking back at what progress might have been made had the Government listened to us, but I had hoped that the Minister would have used this opportunity today to tell us when we will see some legislation for the creation of an environment agency. The Government are not short of parliamentary time, and we could have been making progress on that.

If we are, as Agenda 21 suggests, to have a national sustainability plan, there will have to be a significant change in the Government's attitude. There will have to be proper integration of economic, social and environment issues. What my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said about roads makes that point well. We need to integrate environmental considerations into every area of policy making.

I had intended to say something about forests, but the Secretary of State has acknowledged that there was a great deal of disappointment at the lack of progress there. Governments in Rio were not able to commit themselves to anything meaningful on forests; that is one area which is still in need of urgent attention and international action.

It is currently estimated that deforestation threatens the livelihood of 140 million people who live in or on the margins of forests. Action to combat deforestation must be based on a recognition of the rights of those who live in those areas. That was one of the stumbling blocks and will be one of the difficulties for future progress.

Time is short and many hon. Members wish to speak. There is a general welcome for the goodwill that existed in Rio and the educational role of UNCED—educational perhaps even for Ministers. It may be that the most significant fact is that the conference took place at all and that public attention, from "Newsround" to "Newsnight", was turned to the dramatic problems even for just a short time.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that the hopes that people had 20 years ago—when they thought that they were making progress in putting the concept of sustainable development on to the political agenda—and our hopes following Rio are not dashed and made meaningless.

We must ensure that the next 20 years are spent not quoting the ideals behind Rio or considering what might have been, but ensuring that we make significant strides. Above all else, we must not be complacent about the outcome of the Earth summit. Given the scale of the problems we face, we cannot be complacent.

At the end of the summit, Maurice Strong said that it could have been either

"a high point in our expressions of good intent and enthusiasm and excitement",

or it could be

"the start of a process of fundamental change".

The Government's decisions during the next few months will confirm their commitment or lack of it to the process of fundamental change.

5.23 pm

**Sir Michael Marshall** (Arundel): I am glad to have the opportunity to follow my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). In the interests of making progress, because I agree with the hon. Lady that many hon. Members wish to speak, perhaps I can agree with my right hon. and learned Friend that much good came out of Rio and agree with the hon. Lady that much more needs to be done, and thus begin with a broad consensus between both sides of the House.

I want to add an element to the debate which I believe is important and which inevitably gets lost in our discussions, and that is the role of parliamentarians and this Parliament itself in the process. Inevitably much of the discussion which we have heard and which we shall have later relates to the role of Governments, but, as my right hon. and learned Friend said, when he spoke of non-governmental organisations, other organisations and, in particular, local government, Governments alone cannot provide all the actions required here, and we, too, as parliamentarians, have a role to play, because we can relate to so many aspects of those other organisations.

In that context, I am sure that the House will understand why I draw heavily on the proceedings of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, of which I have honour to be president, and, in particular, on the work of the statutory conference in Cameroon last April during the general election, while looking ahead to the specialist conference on the environment which will take place in Brasilia in November this year. I very much hope that hon. Members will play their full part—I am sure that they will—in that forthcoming event. But in speaking of the run-up to that, it is only right that I should pay a small tribute to the work of the other place, because it was a delegation from their Lordships' House which acted on behalf of our Parliament in the British contribution that led up to Rio.

I make those comments in an attempt to stress the global nature of the interests of parliamentarians. It is within international gatherings such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union that the north-south dialogue can be sustained on a regular basis, where permanent committees looking at the environment pursue such matters. In that sense, it is important that we should carry through the achievements of Rio on an almost day-to-day basis.

Many concerns were spelt out in the run-up to Rio. The British delegation, which was led by the noble Lord Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, played a full part in that process. It is fair to say that three main concerns came out of that preliminary to Rio and I want to measure what happened in the event.

Much of the background anxiety related to the attitude and involvement of the United States and I agree with what my right hon. and learned Friend had to say on American participation. It was significant. Given the difficulties that we all recognise at this point in the American electoral process, what was achieved in that direction was thoroughly worth while.

The three concerns that I would single out from this vast canvas are, first, the general feeling that the earth

*[Sir Michael Marshall]*

charter had been replaced by a non-binding declaration written in the style of the 1970s Stockholm conference which, it was felt, would have little impact; secondly, the suggestion that Agenda 21 was watered down not so much in concept but in respect of funding, raising doubts about its implementation; and, thirdly, the convention on climate change was seen as lacking in targets and timetabling for the future. That was the background.

Taking each of those concerns, hon. Members will have their own views on the degree to which the terms of the Earth summit have been spelt out. Speaking for myself, I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend has made a fair case in suggesting that the Rio declaration of sustainable development principles is a worthy successor to the 1972 Stockholm declaration.

More specifically, on Agenda 21 I believe that it was right in Rio to recognise that sustainable development is not just the concern of Government, but, as I said earlier, should involve international organisations in both the public and private sectors together with individuals and local authorities.

The noble Lord the Earl of Lindsay, a member of the British delegation to the Cameroon IPU conference in April, made the point well when, to paraphrase, he said that for sustainable development to succeed it was necessary to reach beyond Governments, beyond even international conferences and beyond scientists to those at the ground level. He went on to argue that many environmental problems were better solved by local initiative, local knowledge and local involvement.

Let me add my own view: when we speak of the problems of pollution, we should not forget the role of the engineer in society and in the world at large. As Sir William Barlow has recently pointed out, the engineer is frequently blamed for such environmental problems, but he may provide the most obvious solution to them.

I also want to single out the role of local government, and I hope that the House will allow me a small constituency plug. I applaud the work of my local council, Arun district council, which arranged its own environmental conference to coincide with the earth summit. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be one of the first to appreciate the fact that the conference was held in the environmentally protected surroundings of Arundel castle, which is set in the environmentally sensitive area at the foot of the south downs. I am sure that many hon. Members will wish to visit the area on some future occasion, and investigate those claims for themselves. The principle was important, and I hope that the same was happening all over the country.

Many will consider the convention on climate change to be the most significant outcome at Rio. It is clearly of the utmost importance now that all signatory countries, especially those responsible for major emissions, ratify the convention in the near future and publish their plans for implementation. It seems clear from what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said earlier that the United Kingdom is urging other OECD countries to make such a commitment by the end of 1993, and I welcome that.

Let me conclude with some thoughts about the prospects of widespread international co-operation to carry forward the Rio process, and to use the positive involvement of Parliaments in that process. Inevitably, many matters will not be covered in today's debate—matters that may have been on the fringe of the Rio conference. Especially important in my view was the attempt to bring together a world community of satellites through the countries that provide the necessary expertise. The conference of environmental officials that took place in this country before the Rio conference, involving countries from all over the world—including Russia—was significant in that regard. Our Prime Minister took the initiative in suggesting the convening of such a world family of satellites by international agreement; he argued that it should be given the opportunity to tackle drought, famine and the whole range of natural disasters, while also playing an essential peacekeeping role.

It is clear from that example, and from others that I have given, that the summit must be seen as the start of a process in which much work remains to be done. Agreements must be translated into practical action, and I believe that the case has been made for the publication of national plans for the implementation of agreements by all Governments. Those plans can then best be viewed in an overall way by the proposed Sustainable Development Commission.

Britain will have a special opportunity at the forthcoming Lisbon Council, and as it moves into the presidency of the European Council, to continue the process not only with the other 11 Community members but, by extension, through its influence in the OECD. I therefore welcome the eight-point action plan outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend, and, in particular, the commitment to make substantial progress by the end of next year. I look forward to strong support from Her Majesty's Government for the United Nations General Assembly's initiative in regard to the Sustainable Development Commission.

I recognise that many problems remain, and that—certainly in regard to resources—arguments will continue about what can be afforded and how many of the difficulties in the north-south relationship can be resolved. That will be a key element in future discussions between parliamentarians. I look forward to the opportunity to carry forward the process in which we are engaged today through parliamentary and intergovernmental consultations, and in particular to the conference in Brasilia, which will take place in November at the invitation of the Brazilian national congress.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): Is not the most appalling, horrifying waste of human resources one of the problems of Brazil? Before the international conferences return to Brasilia, should not they make clear time and again to the Brazilian Government the utter abhorrence felt by the rest of the world at the murder of street children?

**Sir Michael Marshall:** I fully sympathise with the hon. Lady's view. One of the great advantages of international parliamentary conferences is the fact that they can speak with the frankness—in terms of parliamentary diplomacy—that I have observed the hon. Lady to use; they can often speak much more forcefully than is possible during the diplomatic and intergovernmental process. I give the hon. Lady an undertaking that I shall do all that I can in this respect.

We are seeing the start of an immense challenge, which, however, could prove highly satisfying for the House, the Government and other parliamentarians. We may have an opportunity to work together, and today's debate may contribute to that.

5.35 pm

**Sir David Steel** (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I deplore the habit of certain hon. Members of making speeches early in a debate and then disappearing. Let me therefore begin by making a genuine apology to the House: I shall be missing for the middle of the debate because of a long-standing engagement. I shall, however, be back in time to hear the winding-up speeches.

I welcome the opportunity to speak today, and also to follow the hon. Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), as president of the Inter-Parliamentary Council. I hope that he will agree with me that the spread of parliamentary democracy that we now see in eastern Europe, Africa and other parts of the world is a contributory factor in the creation of a more environmentally conscious world. I am sure that the two are related; I am also sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that pressure from Parliaments for the restoration of authority to international bodies such as UNESCO—which should, perhaps be mentioned tangentially in the debate—is extremely important.

Whether we see the Rio summit as a success or a failure depends on where our expectations begin. Some months before the conference started, the director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Mostafa Tolba, claimed:

"people everywhere look to 1992 as our last chance to save the Earth."

According to that benchmark, the summit can be regarded as something of a failure: the agreements signed at Rio will achieve little in the creation of an environmentally sustainable world. If, however, we apply more modest standards, Rio offers some hope for the future.

The agreements themselves—the treaties on biodiversity and climate change; the set of principles for sustainable forestry; agreement on the need for a future convention on desertification, which has not been mentioned so far, but which I consider extremely important; Agenda 21, the blueprint for action to lead development into environmentally sustainable areas—are all of modest value. All except the treaties are either not legally binding, or lacking in timetables and, more important, cash commitments. The United States Government must bear a large part of the blame for that, as they did their best to weaken the treaties, ultimately refusing to sign the biodiversity treaty and blocking a convention on land-based sources of marine pollution and a ban on the dumping of nuclear waste at sea. I consider all those attitudes regrettable.

Probably the most crucial indictment of the summit, however, lies in its failure properly to link the issues of poverty and population with that of environmental degradation. There was no joint commitment to reduce levels of developing-country debt, and all attempts to ensure that trade and the operation of GATT were discussed received a rebuff. The entire topic of population growth was kept off the agenda, mainly thanks to pressure from the Vatican and some Catholic nations.

My conclusion is that the planet will not be saved—to use the term employed in my opening quotation—any more than it was after the last United Nations conference on the environment, which took place in Stockholm in 1972. But, just as that conference left a legacy of Environment Ministries and legislation that helped the developed nations to improve their environments, so Rio's success will depend largely on the strength of the institutional machinery that it leaves behind.

In that respect, I believe that the picture is far from gloomy. As the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, it is up to hon. Members, over the months and years ahead, to monitor carefully the reaction of our own Government in the preparation of the reports called for by the institutions that have been left behind following the summit.

I agree with the hon. Member for Dewsbury that perhaps the most constructive way to proceed in the debate is for the different parties to make suggestions, which the Government may adopt. I wish to deal with three matters, the first of which is the Government's commitment to assisting development in the third world. I recognise that favourable terms of trade and the writing off of debt—I hope for a return to the original Trinidad terms—are far more important than the figures of official Government aid. Nevertheless, I want to dwell on the aid target, which has become a ritual incantation in my speeches and in those of many hon. Members: we deplore the fact that the figure has been dropping. The hon. Member for Dewsbury mentioned the figure going down from 0·51 per cent. when the Government took office to a deplorable 0·27 per cent.

We should constantly highlight the Government's failure to reach the aid target as a sign of their lack of commitment to world development. The World Development Movement surveyed candidates in the 1983 election. One of the questions was:

"Do you believe that the next British Government should reach the UN target of providing 0·7 per cent. of our GNP as official aid to developing countries by the end of five years in office?"

The Conservative candidate for Huntingdon—a certain Mr. Major—ticked the "yes" box and added underneath in his own handwriting, "I hope so!" Since then, the Conservative candidate for Huntingdon has been Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and now Prime Minister. Over the same period, official assistance as a percentage of gross national product has fallen to 0·32 per cent. this year.

At the Rio summit, the Minister for Overseas Development, the noble Baroness Chalker, publicly expressed regret about that, and blamed the Treasury. No doubt she is perfectly correct. The Government must accept some responsibility for reconsidering their commitment to the target, because it was set way back in 1974, when 30 million people faced starvation in Africa. Today, in sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million people are characterised as vulnerable because of drought and refugee movement.

The Government's excuse for not meeting the target in boom times, such as in 1987, was that the gross national product was growing too quickly and that it was impossible to raise the percentage targeted. The excuse in times of recession is that there are not enough resources. When will the Gvoernment think it right to meet the target? They should make an absolute commitment to reaching the United Nation target by the end of the present Parliament.

*[Sir David Steel]*

Moreover, according to recent studies, the volume of United Kingdom aid has fallen absolutely in real, inflation-adjusted terms by 21 per cent. Britain is the only OECD country other than New Zealand to have registered a decline in aid. Our gross national product is 23 per cent. higher than when the Government took office, but aid as a percentage of that now higher gross national product has fallen. We are about to be overtaken in absolute volume of aid by the Netherlands and Canada, both of which have smaller economies than us.

The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, in his post-Rio statement, referred to the calling of a future conference of global non-governmental organisations. I hope that they will use that opportunity to say that the aid programme will be advanced and that it will be less concerned with prestigious projects linked to the success of British companies. I am not against the success of British companies of course but I am concerned about using the expertise of non-governmental organisations in agriculture, irrigation and all the measures that will help to raise living standards fundamentally throughout the third world.

My second point is that the Government could do more in our domestic policies to raise public awareness of environmental issues and to adjust departmental policies to meet the theories that were expressed at Rio. Most people accept that the ozone layer is at risk—I hesitate to say that in the presence of the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman)—and that the incidence of skin cancer and cataracts is increasing. Evidence from Australia shows that rates of melanoma have risen fivefold in the past 50 years.

We know that air pollution is becoming more intolerable. I believe that London is going the way of Los Angeles, Mexico and Athens in experiencing regular fogs and chronic air congestion in the summer. It is forecast that, in the next 18 years, the number of motor cars in this country will double, yet the Minister spoke of widening the M25. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who has now left, made a telling intervention: we must take the Department of Transport by the scruff of the neck and say, "You cannot go on producing transport policies that you think you can get on the cheap in this country while making these commitments at international summits such as Rio." There is a direct link between Britain's failure to invest in freight and passenger transport on the railways and the increasing air pollution from which we suffer.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) regularly speaks for us on environmental matters. As he represents Bermondsey, he is keen on pricing the private car lower down the scale of human desire. I am an unashamed keen motorist but, more important, I represent a constituency where, in parts, public transport is almost non-existent. Perhaps I have a slightly different perspective from my hon. Friend, but we agree that there is a case for establishing a global system of tradeable emission licences for the control of pollution, especially carbon dioxide. A total global carbon target could be allocated to different nations, but the allocations could be tradeable between them, with the United Nations acting as a regulator to ensure competition in such a market.

An allocation mechanism could reflect the imbalance in per capita carbon dioxide emission rates. A richer nation, such as ourselves, which emits 3 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide from 1 per cent. of its population, would have to buy carbon licences from poorer countries. That would not only offer an incentive to reduce emissions but transfer resources from rich to poor. It could be a powerful and flexible mechanism, offering richer countries a range of options in reducing emissions. If they felt that domestic constraints limited their reductions, they could buy licences from poorer countries, increasing the flow of resources to developing nations and still cutting global pollution.

**Dr. Kim Howells** (Pontypridd): What will happen in the countries from which licences are purchased? What if, for example, a country was planning to increase its coal or oil production massively and to utilise that itself? Surely the impact of an inefficient technology on the global total would be at least similar, if not worse.

**Sir David Steel:** As I understand it, each country would have a set emission quota so that, if a country sold its quota to us because we wished to exceed ours, that country would not be able to use the proceeds to increase pollution because it would still be regulated by the United Nations regulatory authority and would have to keep within a total limit. That is how I understand the proposal.

I shall deal with the third issue of population growth briefly because other hon. Members wish to speak. The United Nations 1990 population fund report stated:

"At some time in the not too distant future the changes" in world population

"may cross the threshold into catastrophe."

That is a pretty dramatic statement, but I think that it is true.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has done a service not only to this country but to many others. In a recent speech, he said that all the scientific evidence shows that population numbers will continue to rise from 5·4 billion on the planet now to 8·4 billion by the year 2025.

It is projected that some parts of the globe—south-east Asia, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan in particular—will double their populations within the next 20 years. Bangladesh clearly lacks the ability to support such an increase, thus presenting many of its population with the stark choice of emigration or starvation.

As the 1990s will experience the fastest ever population growth—the equivalent of two United Kingdom populations coming on to the planet every 14 months—we must treat the matter seriously. I do not believe that the solution lies in coercive population control. India's shambles of compulsory sterilisation in the 1970s made family planning a dirty word for a decade in many parts of the world, although countries such as Thailand have worked miracles without a hint of coercion but using instead high levels of health care and education, especially for women.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones** *rose*——

**Sir David Steel:** I shall give way in a moment. In the mid-1960s, the average Thai family had six or seven children, whereas today it has only two or three. That is a great success, and I shall give another example in a moment.

**Mr. Jones:** I take the right hon. Member's point about Thailand, but what does he think about the policies enacted by China, which has always a quarter of the world population if not more, and their relative success or otherwise?

**Sir David Steel:** I have seen it for myself but of course, as a Liberal, I could not subscribe to Government-dictated policies decreeing that people shall have only one child. However, there is no doubt that, in such a hugely over-populated country, such a policy has had a great effect. There might be a happy medium whereby Government incentives could be used to keep down population growth, but I do not favour the coercion that the Chinese used to implement their policy.

The other example that I give is perhaps more interesting and detailed. It is drawn from a district in Kenya, another country with a high population growth rate. The Embu-Meru district of Kenya has an acceptable population growth rate. The reason is the pioneering work of a Scottish missionary called Dr. Clive Irvine, who established in the Chogoria mission, not a family planning network but a network of rural clinics for women's health, within which family planning was a natural part of the programme. His work continues today, and I have seen it for myself in that district. It is a good example of how rural development policies should operate.

However, there is some good news on this front. The World Health Organisation's report which was published yesterday states that women in the developing world are today having an average of 3·9 children, compared with 6·1 20 years ago. It states clearly that the increase in programmes of family planning and contraception is the cause, and that the use of contraception has increased tenfold in 25 years.

Lastly, in the argument about population, it is pointless to become involved in an arid discussion of whether it is the third world, with its large families and poverty, which is responsible for the problems, or whether, as the third world states, it is the OECD countries, which have less than 15 per cent. of the worlds population but produce 70 per cent. of the world global economic activity, consume a disproportionate share of the world's resources and create a disproportionate share of the global pollution. It is a sterile argument, because both are correct.

We need twin policies which will control population in the underdeveloped world and make us much more conscious of the devastation that we wreak on the rest of the planet's resources. I hope that that is the long overdue lesson which will result from the failure of the Rio summit to tackle the population problem.

5.54 pm

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this debate and even more grateful to the electors of Blackpool, North for giving you the opportunity to do so. I am also especially grateful for the opportunity to follow such speakers as my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall) and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), both of whom have distinguished, not to say slightly intimidating, reputations on this subject.

I am fortunate to follow Mr. Norman Miscampbell as the hon. Member for Blackpool, North. He is well known to many hon. Members of all parties as a man of independent spirit and great character. He is also a distinguished lawyer and has now left politics to return to his career at the Bar. I am sure that the House's loss is the legal profession's gain, and I know that all hon. Members will join me in wishing him well.

I am also fortunate in being elected to represent the town where I was born, and I am proud of the fact that my constituency—perhaps uniquely—needs no introduction. Blackpool is a national institution; it is the jewel of the English coast and it is by far the greatest of our seaside resorts. As Stanley Holloway once said:

"It is a famous seaside place what's noted for fresh air and fun."

Blackpool is the home of the tower, the pleasure beach, the golden mile and the illuminations as well as Ripley's Odditorium and Gipsy Petulengro, the famous clairvoyant who tells the fortunes of the rich and famous—somewhat more reliably than a BBC exit poll, I understand. Almost 17 million people visit Blackpool every year, Scots, Welsh, Irish and, of course, Yorkshiremen who cross over into Lancashire like east Germans visiting the west for the first time. It is said that the warmth of a real Lancashire welcome in Blackpool cannot fail to melt the heart of even the most typically miserable and grumbling Yorkshireman, some of whom I am pleased to see have now joined us in the Chamber.

Maiden speeches often contain statistical information about an hon. Member's constituency. Such statistical information is often dry and of little interest to other hon. Members, but I thought that I should like to provide hon. Members with basic facts about Britain's number one tourist resort. Blackpool has a total of 120,000 holiday beds, which is more than the whole of Portugal. More than 100 million ice cream cones are eaten on Blackpool pleasure beach every year and, if the hot dogs consumed there were set out end to end, they would stretch beyond Liverpool and deep into Cheshire for a total distance of 47·5 miles.

Blackpool is the nation's favourite holiday centre, and hon. Members who have not yet made their plans for the summer recess may care to know that there are still places available in some of Blackpool's 3,500 hotels and guest houses. However, although Blackpool is a tourist centre and a place of fun, like other coastal resorts it also has severe social problems—most notably, unemployment. It is sad that Blackpool's unemployment rate is the highest in Lancashire, and I hope that the Government will take note of Blackpool borough council's request for assisted area and urban programme status.

I take this opportunity to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his skilful handling of the recent summit in Rio de Janeiro. The binding conventions which he signed on climate change and biodiversity represent a real step forward in improving the global environment. At such a conference it would have been impossible to achieve perfect solutions to satisfy everyone. Environmental protection arouses popular passions in the developed world, but it also often engenders resentment in less developed countries, because our good intentions can often be seen as unwarranted interference in their internal affairs.

The Prime Minister had to operate in difficult conditions. He faced the danger that everyone's expectations were bound to be beyond what was likely to be achieved. Nevertheless, he won some real prizes and can be justifiably proud of Britain's contribution to the Rio

*[Mr. Harold Elletson]*

conference. I know that he would like to go further, and to ensure that further measures are taken to build on his success in Rio—especially a binding multilateral commitment on forests, and progress in tackling the overpopulation problem. I share his hopes in that respect, and I believe that Britain can and must take a lead in solving those problems.

Rio was a vital first step which has focused the world's attention on environmental problems—but it was only a first step. Now we must ensure that the high profile of the conference and its focus on global environmental issues does not obscure other deep-seated but more local environmental challenges. The big challenges are not all exclusively centred on issues of a global nature or on the third world, or even concerned simply with environmental protection. Some are closer to home, and involve the urgent need to repair damage already done.

I have travelled extensively in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and I have seen something of the environmental catastrophe which has engulfed that region. The Governments of central Europe and the former Soviet Union now have to reverse the effects of the reckless damage wreaked on local environments by their communist predecessors. It is especially difficult for them to do so while trying to introduce market economies, when their resources are somewhat stretched. The state of the worst environmental hot spots in those areas shows the magnitude of the problem. One of the worst is in northern Bohemia, right at the centre of Europe, further west than Vienna, in an area now referred to as the "black triangle". Industrial pollution has poisoned almost everything there —the air, the rivers and the earth.

I am proud that the British Government are helping to clean up those areas. Our help complements the European Community initiative under the PHARE programme, one fifth of whose funds are earmarked for environmental aid. The Department of the Environment now has a specialist unit dealing with environmental projects in eastern Europe. The unit has been doing a good job since its creation in April, overseeing the environmental know-how funds. It is beginning to identify environmental hot spots, and to participate in projects such as the creation of an environmental education centre in Warsaw, which channels British environmental expertise to policy makers, managers and scientists in eastern Europe. The unit is also advising east European Governments on the formulation of environmental laws.

The House will recognise the importance of such activities, given the Government's ambition to create a wider European Community and to open its doors to new members from eastern Europe. I hope that aid for environmental projects in eastern Europe will be increased and will also be used to encourage British business to participate in cleaning up pollution there. As is so often the case, environmental problems can also be significant commercial opportunities.

Furthermore, I hope that the environmental know-how funds will soon include projects in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which includes a multitude of environmental hot spots, both actual and potential. As a Russian speaker with a strong personal interest in that country's future, I am delighted that the Department of the Environment is beginning to advise water authorities in the Russian Federation on healthy and effective environmental management. I hope that that will be the first of many such projects in the CIS and the Russian Federation.

Caring for the environment begins at home. The north-west, and Blackpool in particular, has suffered for many years from polluted bathing water, partly due to lack of investment in new equipment. The privatisation of the water companies now offers the potential for unleashing massive amounts of new capital with beneficial effects on the environment. I am pleased to say that a sewage treatment plant for the Fylde coast is due to be completed at the end of 1996, which will enable Blackpool's water to meet EC standards.

However, big environmental projects, whether at home or abroad, should not conceal the fact that little things can immeasurably improve or destroy the quality of people's lives. Green spaces must be protected to ensure that families in urban areas have parks and public gardens to enjoy. In my constituency, the county council is now attempting to ride roughshod over 13,000 local people who object to its plan to turn a playing field—Bispham Gala field—into a housing estate. I understand that that plan has now been referred to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for a decision, and I hope that he will conclusively reject it.

It may sound trivial to talk about a local playing field in the context of the ozone layer, biodiversity and some of the other global issues that have been mentioned today, but what good are conventions on biodiversity if local government tyrants can impose their will on families and deny them access to nature? Such things are fundamental to the quality of human life. What politician can presume to judge the place in people's hearts of bluebell fields in spring time, of a stretch of deserted coastline, or of the golden light of an autumn evening flickering through the leaves of an English oak? To destroy such things is to tear out part of the soul of England and to destroy the poetry in the lives of ordinary people.

When my right hon. and learned Friend decides on the fate of a local playing field, an ancient woodland or a village green, let him remember the words of Oliver Goldsmith—I was pleased to hear him quote Goldsmith, who is one of my favourite poets, earlier in the debate. Goldsmith described the desolation caused by the destruction of such things:

> "Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
> Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
> Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
> And desolation saddens all thy green . . .
> Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all,
> And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
> And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
> Far, far away, thy children leave the land."

The Secretary of State's hand is not the hand of a spoiler, but he must ensure that it is the hand of a determined defender of nature, and that he uses it to resist those who seek to change, to pollute and to destroy. He played a vital part in securing the successful outcome of the Rio summit. Now he must continue to safeguard our local environment, and I wish him well in his endeavours.

6.8 pm

**Mr. Kim Howells** (Pontypridd): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on his maiden speech. It was a thoughtful speech, and I was glad to hear somebody mention the problems of eastern

Europe, which are enormously serious. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will grace the Chamber with his concerns for that part of our continent.

I apologise to the Minister who is to sum up because I shall have to leave the debate as I have an appointment with a physiotherapist. I have a back problem, which I suspect owes a great deal to some full-backs a couple of decades ago who were less than environmentally friendly.

I am probably the only hon. Member present in the Chamber who was lucky enough to go to Amazonia with the Select Committee on the Environment. I remember well what an awe-inspiring view there was for the Secretary of State for the Environment when he climbed a rickety tower and looked out across the jungle. I suspect that his white knuckles owed as much to his worries about whether the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was nicking a bit of responsibility from the National Rivers Authority while he was away as they did to his fear of heights. It was good to see him there and I am sure that, like the rest of us who were on that visit, he must have been in awe of the huge and wonderful treasure house of biodiversity which is Amazonia.

Amazonia is a huge area. From west to east, it is the distance from Lisbon to Warsaw and from north to south, it is the distance from Helsinki to Naples. That is Amazonia Réal. It is an enormous treasure house of biodiversity which is threatened now, as it has long been threatened. We learned many salutary lessons as we travelled around that vast area. We saw some tremendous projects for sustainable agriculture, some of which have been funded by the Government. We saw some of the efforts being made to wean people from the most destructive industries in Amazonia, such as the gold mining which is washing away the river banks.

The most salutary lesson we received came from the answers that the Brazilian Environment Minister gave us when, in our self-righteous way, we asked him why the Brazilians were not taking greater care of the marvellous resource of the Amazonian jungle. He said, "You are a fine one to talk. Britain destroyed its forests in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Almost none of your primeval forests is left, yet you presume to tell us what we should do about our forests." He is dead right.

The onus may now have shifted from how we care for our forests—I am afraid that we still do not worry too much about many of our deciduous forests—to a problem that is far more serious, but may just still be manageable. The problem is what we do about the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that we put into the atmosphere.

How shall we overcome the sense of resentment that many in the developing world feel when we try to convince them that we know better than they do how to look after their natural resources? It is not an easy thing to do. That resentment is based on fact. The amount of pollution put out by the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—the developed countries —is enormous and constitutes by far the majority of atmospheric and aqueous pollution.

The International Energy Agency publication, "Climate Change Policy Initiatives", which was published in March this year, points out that by the year 2000 some 7·5 billion tonnes of carbon will have been released into the atmosphere throughout the world. If the OECD policies are successful—if we stick to them and enforce them—we may save 314 million tonnes from going into the atmosphere by the year 2000. That is one twenty-fourth —a tiny proportion—of the amount that will be released. Yet to some of the Governments who took part in the Rio conference, even that is too ambitious a target. What are we to do?

If developing countries are to reach better standards —even standards which we would still consider to be primitive and entirely unacceptable in terms of quality of life—the world will have to generate far more electricity and it will have to use far more energy. How shall we counteract the inevitable release of more gases into the atmosphere? There will be more carbon dioxide as more coal and oil are burnt.

Let us think about what that statement means. Are we to deny the developing world the right to raise its standard of living even marginally, and through sustainable means, possibly through some of the marvellous projects for sustainable agriculture which this country finances in places such as Brazil? Even sustainable agriculture requires steel plants, tractors, vehicles to move goods around and railways to shift products from the interior to the ports. In other words, such agriculture will require more energy. Who are we to deny that to developing countries?

The biggest problem of all may be encountered as China continues to improve its standard of living. Last year, China produced 1·1 billion tonnes of coal and it has been told by the International Monetary Fund that it must increase its coal production if it is to fuel the improvements that it desires. Last year, the United States produced about 860 million tonnes of coal. Our coal production was about 96 million tonnes last year and may fall as low as 90 million tonnes this year. The Chinese are producing 11 times as much coal as we are and the Americans are producing nine times as much. The Russians even now are producing six times as much. All that coal is being burnt.

There is probably no more dramatic example of what we are doing to the atmosphere than to see a 2,000 MW power station with steam coming from the cooling towers, and other gases coming from the grids and from the chimneys which stand over the power station. Such power stations are dramatic emblems of atmospheric pollution. They are repeated elevenfold in China, sixfold in the United States and fivefold in Russia, to mention but three countries. It is happening everywhere.

There is huge investment at present in oil exploration as we search for more hydrocarbon reserves. In this country, there is a dash for gas as we attempt to meet EC regulations on atmospheric pollution. But gas is also a hydrocarbon, and although it is cleaner than coal and oil, it still produces carbon dioxide and other gases that we do not want.

There is no doubt that coal and oil production will continue to rise throughout the world. Who knows whether it will rise quickly, slowly or moderately? The science of energy demand projection is uncertain and we have inevitably been wrong at times. What is certain is that we shall require more electricity to feed industry, commerce and homes which increasingly use electronics. When an office block is equipped these days, one almost needs to build a power station to fuel it because it is so electronically intensive.

There are many ways in which we may be able to counteract the trends, but when it comes to counteracting the overall growth in energy demand, the onus must be on the developed countries. Realistically, we shall not be able

*[Mr. Kim Howells]*

to prevent the developing countries from mining more coal, tapping more oil and gas, and using those products to produce electricity.

Who knows what a line of efficient, clean-burn power stations could do for the southern Sahara in terms of tapping the vast water reserves which lie underground? Whatever happened in that area, it requires water and there will be people who will try to ensure that energy is brought there and created there so that the water can be brought to the surface. That would alleviate the terrible plight of people living in the sub-Saharan region.

But what does that mean for us? The developed world is the only manageable area in the world where we have any chance of reducing carbon emissions and emissions of other greenhouse gases into the air. As reliance on electricity and electronics proceeds—I see no sign whatever of its declining in any of the countries that I have read about—we must ask ourselves whether we can continue to use black fuels such as coal, oil and gas in the way that we have done until now.

There are many alternatives to the way in which we currently burn coal, oil and gas. Of course, there is no question but that we could burn them much more efficiently and cleanly. There are many arguments about what percentage of overall use such measures might save. We may make the way in which we burn fuel less polluting. We may burn less fuel. But I fear that, realistically, in percentage terms the reduction will be small as demand increases.

We may also do other things to encourage greater fuel efficienHincy. We could begin to use technologies which are still on the fringe of adaptation to many industries and to commerce. We could start using inexhaustible fuels such as wind, solar and wave power. There are many such sources and there has been a great deal of debate about them.

However, I have examined wind power in California, where perhaps the greatest application of wind power has occurred so far. All the windmills in California cannot provide even 0·5 per cent. of the demand for energy of San Francisco. We have to be realistic. There is no question but that renewable energy will help. I should like every house constructed from now on to have a solar panel on the roof so that we can remove the basic need to use fuel to heat water. Even if we merely warm the water up, solar panels could have a huge effect on our overall electricity demand and the demand for other fuels such as gas.

We could improve our transportation systems. Transport is an enormous pollutant. We could especially improve public transportation systems. But I cannot see how developed countries can generate sufficient electricity to meet the great baseload demand without continuing to burn vast amounts of oil, coal and gas—unless we use another fuel. It is not easy for someone like me to say this. I gave evidence against the Hinkley C pressurised water reactor. Like many of my colleagues in both the Opposition and the Conservative party, I feel a great sense of trepidation about nuclear energy. It worries me that we have not even begun to take on the problems associated with the long-term storage of highly radiated waste. I worry that we have made an awful botch of the dreams that we once had of completing the nuclear cycle by constructing fast reactors.

I worry that Britain's nuclear policy has been a litany of disaster. It has been enormously expensive as a result of dreadful mismanagement—the construction of Magnox reactors, advanced gas-cooled reactors, and our great periods of hesitancy when we did not know which way to turn. I do not for one moment hold up any other country as an example of unbridled success, but if we are to generate great baseloads of electricity, we must ask ourselves where we are to do it. Sooner or later we must face up to whether we want to predicate our future energy policy on preserving industries which at this moment are polluting our atmosphere such as the coal industry, the oil industry and the gas industry.

I came from the coal industry and I fought perhaps as hard as any Member of Parliament to keep it functioning. I should like to see it continue to function, but I do not see the case for expanding the coal industry. We must use what resources we have now in the most environmentally sensitive way. We must use coal efficiently, for example, by means of clean-burn systems. But we must also confront the issue of how we are to generate electricity in the future.

I have not been a friend of the nuclear industry by any means. I continue to harbour great doubts about it. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say about how the Government see the future of that industry in the context of their overall approach to energy. I do not say "energy policy" because I do not believe that the Government have one: shamefully, they have handed energy policy over to the market, but even the market is wary about how to proceed from this point forward.

If we are to make real the promises that we have made at least to the public, if not to the developing countries, about our desire to reduce atmospheric pollution, we must confront the controversial issue of nuclear energy. Where is our great power-generating capacity to come from in future? How are we to construct power stations, and what fuels will we use in them? Those questions can no longer be dodged. I hope that when the Government consider the nuclear industry, as I believe that they are doing now in the nuclear review, they will take that question into account and not go for the easy answers which, I am afraid, Governments of all complexions have so often adopted in the past as a retreat from one of the great problems which face the world.

6.26 pm

**Mr. Richard Ottaway** (Croydon, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells). I appreciate that, for someone from his background, it was not an easy speech to make. But he must be prepared to embrace the nuclear industry, for reasons which he gave in the earlier part of his speech. We cannot continue pumping carbon into the atmosphere in the amounts emitted from China, Russia and the other countries that he cited.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on his most amusing, entertaining and sincere maiden speech. His lists of statistics left me with visions of hot dogs stretching from his constituency down into Cheshire.

I shall not take long, because I was lucky enough to have a bite at the cherry in the debate on the summit three weeks ago. I give a broad welcome to the success that was achieved in Rio. It was not an earth-shattering result. I was

amused to read that, when the general secretary was asked whether the conference had been a success, he said that it could not be described in those terms.

The summit was a gathering of many leading environmentalists from all parts of the globe. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who has returned to the Front Bench, on his achievements. He was there for a considerable time, and it was an achievement to obtain the result that he did.

I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the best help that we could give the developing world is to press on with the GATT negotiations. I believe that the negotiations will be of great assistance to the developing world if they can be brought to a successful conclusion.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that his main disappointment was that he was not more successful on forestry. I share his view on that, but, perhaps predictably, my greatest anxiety is about the failure to achieve any positive result on world population growth. I agree with every word of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), who is no longer in the Chamber. It is interesting that population growth is emerging as a widely studied issue. There is a growing recognition that it is a fundamental cause of world poverty and environmental degradation.

The House does not have to take it from me. Many distinguished observers—the royal family, for example—are prepared to put their reputations on the line and to link population growth with environmental decline. The Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles may not appear to be natural champions of that cause, but they are advised by eminent scientists and their views should not be taken lightly.

When people such as David Bellamy, who is president of Population Concern—the only charity in this country concentrating on the population issue—links environmental decline with population growth, it has to be taken seriously. Sir Crispin Tickell, probably the most eminent expert in the field, has said that population growth is linked with environmental decline. We must appreciate that that is an issue whose time has come. I am confused why that was not recognised by delegates at the Rio summit. I am dismayed to hear that there is barely any reference to population growth in the declaration.

Sadly we are having to debate without having seen the declaration, which is not yet available. That is a rather unsatisfactory state of affairs. I understand that there is no mention of population growth in the declaration. It mentions at great length other issues that we have been discussing, such as deforestation, desertification, pollution and carbon fuel emissions.

We merely have to consider the amount of carbon being pumped into the atmosphere in China, and the fact that, as China's population increases, pollution and the amount of carbon pumped into the atmosphere will increase, to understand the link between population growth and environmental decline.

Population growth is the root cause of environmental decline, and I was disappointed that it was not mentioned in the declaration. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will cast some light on it when he winds up. I was pleased to note that he mentioned population planning in his speech. It has become fashionable to use the expression, "population control", which implies a rather coercive method of tackling the problem, which I could not support.

For political reasons, delegates shied away from the subject of population growth at Rio. People who are opposed to abortion confuse that issue with family planning. The prevalent lobby in the United States of America is behind that view and that explains why the US has withdrawn all funding to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. We cannot ignore the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church. I make no criticism of that church—[HON. MEMBERS: "Go on."] It is inappropriate to criticise Roman Catholics. They believe in family planning. The only argument is over the method. They believe in natural methods, whereas others—such as myself—are prepared to believe in artificial methods.

**Mr. Thomas McAvoy** (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The hon. Gentleman is not an expert.

**Mr. Ottaway:** I do not claim to be. I am simply observing that Roman Catholics believe in natural methods of family planning. It would only take two people —the Pope and the President of the USA—to turn the tide on attitudes to population growth and worldwide family planning.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The hon. Gentleman mentioned that America has stopped its contribution to the UN population fund. Does he know why Britain reduced its contribution by two thirds during the first nine years of the Conservative Government, cutting it from nearly £9 million to just over £3 million per annum?

**Mr. Ottaway:** The hon. Gentleman would have to address that question to those on the Government Front Bench. I am prepared to defend the Government's record. No Government have a better record in increasing funding for population policies.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** What about funding to the UN?

**Mr. Ottaway:** It makes no difference whether the money goes to the UN or straight to family planning programmes.

When the United States withdrew funding from the UNFPA, leaving the international Planned Parenthood Federation high and dry, the British Government alone came to the rescue. I do not think that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) can criticise the British Government's population policies. I shall come to the level of funding in a second.

Global population has doubled since the second world war and is predicted to stabilise in the year 2050. At what level will it stabilise? At 10 billion or 15 billion? Failure to tackle that at the Rio summit leaves the question unanswered. If Rio had been prepared to support and implement a global family planning programme, people could predict the level at which world population would stabilise and the associated environmental degradation.

I agree that family planning programmes must be voluntary. I agree with the tenor of the intervention by the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) who criticised the compulsory, coercive attitude to family planning in China. I would never defend the Chinese Government's approach to the problem.

*[Mr. Ottaway]*

The success stories show that a well implemented family planning programme will achieve results, as was illustrated by mention of the programme in Kenya. There is an amazing unmet demand for family planning throughout the world. The Government estimate that unmet demand is 100 million and the UN estimates that 300 million couples want family planning. It is incumbent on developed nations to provide the necessary funding to meet that demand.

Everything comes back to the question of money. The gross cost of Agenda 21 was originally estimated to be $625 billion. I imagine it comes as no surprise to anyone that funding for the entirety of Agenda 21 was not accepted with great enthusiasm by the developed nations, which would have ended up paying for it. Obviously it was not on.

A global family planning programme would cost only $4 billion. Compared with anticipated expenditure on Agenda 21, that is peanuts. Such a programme could have a dramatic effect on the world's environment. It is tragic that such a low-cost programme, which could be so effective, is being ignored.

The developing nations must reassess their attitude to family planning and must demand more. The United Kingdom is prepared to give extra funding for family planning and, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Workington, the United Kingdom Government have a first-class record in that area. The weakness—and what the hon. Member for Workington should have pointed out—is that the total spend on family planning from the Overseas Development Administration's budget is only between 1 and 2 per cent. So it is easy to bump it up by 50 per cent. The ODA should be prepared to increase its funding for family planning programmes to 4 per cent. That would have more impact on the environment than anything else that will be discussed today.

6.39 pm

**Mr. Mike Watson** (Glasgow, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on his maiden speech. It is just three years since I made mine and I know that it is a daunting task, but he carried it off effectively and competently. I wish him well in his parliamentary career.

The hon. Gentleman introduced some levity to this inevitably serious debate and I should like to do the same. A major Scottish newspaper, *Scotland on Sunday*, reported on the Rio summit under the headline

"Did the Earth Move for You?"

It concluded that it had moved for very few people. It asked a number of people whether the Rio summit had changed their lives and the responses were interesting, to say the least. Miss Dierdre Hutton, chairman of the Scottish Consumer Council, said:

"I have changed to low energy light bulbs and walk to the shops instead of going by car. I would like to cycle to work but as the office is in Glasgow and I live in Kelso I would arrive at 12 noon and have to leave at 10 past".

Crawford Beveridge, chief executive of Scottish Enterprise, said:

"I have installed a high efficiency boiler in my home and fitted doubled glazing . . . I am about to start agitating for kerb-side recycling facilities".

I am not sure whether that means he will do that in King's Cross.

My favourite quote came from Gerard Kelly, a Scottish actor of some repute, who said:

"I now try to recycle most things except toilet paper because I couldn't stand the thought of someone else using it first."

There are limits on how far recycling can go.

People I have spoken to about the Rio conference were disappointed by it. It was a disappointment to those of us who had hoped that some of the existing global ecological and economic imbalances would be redressed. Immense challenges confront the developed world, and the summit offered us the opportunity to do something meaningful about them. Unfortunately, that opportunity was passed by. The challenges include the facts that the richest 20 per cent. of the world consume 80 per cent. of the world's resources, that an area of tropical forest the size of Britain is destroyed every year and that scientific research has shown that, in the next 40 years, greenhouse gases could raise the earth's temperature by up to 3 deg C. Those facts are frightening. I accept that the summit addressed them, but it failed to reach agreement on a pattern of economic development designed to save us from the environmental catastrophe that we face.

At least the summit recognised that the issues of the environment and development cannot be separated, which is welcome. However, surely the priority should be the problem of poverty, which cripples so many in the third world. It was extremely disappointing to note that all the reports that led up to and followed the summit rarely mentioned poverty. I understand why so much attention was focused on the environment, but poverty is the major problem now facing the world. The summit offered little hope to the world's poor. It failed to construct the framework for international, regional and local action to achieve sustainable development in the third world, which is crucial.

Agenda 21 holds out some hope in terms of achieving sustainable development. It produced policy statements on primary health care and sustainable agricultural development, which could serve as useful guidelines for further action. However, the likely benefits from such policies are threatened by the fact that the developed countries have not committed the necessary sums to fund them.

The donor countries pledged a few billion pounds, which falls far short of the estimated extra £40 billion that is required to implement Agenda 21 and the other conventions. The total bill has been estimated at $125 billion. If the developed countries achieved the United Nations contribution target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP for development and assistance, that bill would be met. It appears that that will not happen. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the Minister said nothing about when Britain hopes to achieve that funding target.

The UN target figure is not only the best way in which to judge our commitment to aid programmes; it is also an important indicator of Britain's commitment to Agenda 21, which we should back with new resources. The Prime Minister said in his famous quote from Rio that money is the root of all progress. In terms of development aid that is unquestionably true. The Prime Minister should be held to that commitment and it should be underwritten by deeds. The Government should drag Britain towards achieving the UN aid contribution target of 0·7 per cent. of GNP. I accept that that must be done in stages, but

when successive Governments have been pressed on this matter they have cited the now sadly familiar refrain about aid increasing when economic circumstances permit.

The charity, Action Aid, carried out a survey on the comparative aid between 1975 and 1990. It compared the growth in GNP with the growth in overseas development aid. The survey is revealing, because it shows that even when our economy has been growing strongly and steadily —that may not happen often—the Government, for one reason or another, have not found the necessary resources to make significant progress towards achieving the UN aid target.

Since 1975, Britain's economy has grown four times faster than our contributions to official development assistance. The 1991 figure shows an upturn in contributions, which is welcome, but that belated increase means that Britain is still contributing only 0·32 per cent. of GNP. Let us compare that figure with that of the other major players within the European Community. Germany and France contribute 0·4 and 0·56 per cent. of GNP respectively. The only two EC countries that exceed the 0·7 per cent. target are the Netherlands with 0·88 per cent. and Denmark with 0·96 per cent.

There is much to be done and the Government should not be complacent about our current contribution of 0·32 per cent. It is important to remember that, in 1979, we contributed 0·5 per cent. of GNP—I hope that Conservative Members will accept that I am not seeking to score political points—but it was allowed to reach the nadir of 0·27 per cent. a year ago. We are lagging well behind our EC partners and we must make progress. Let us hope that our contribution will be increased next year. Let us be charitable to the Government and accept that the economy may be on an upward cycle. If we continue our current level of growth we will reach the 0·7 per cent. aid contribution target by 2000. Any steps towards that are welcome.

On the basis of what we have heard today and what we heard from the Prime Minister last week, I doubt whether that rate of increase will be sustained. The poor countries desperately hope that it will be, but, in common with the Opposition, they will not hold their breath in anticipation. They know the Government's record.

Agenda 21 envisages a massive transfer of resources from defence spending to spending on the economic and environmental needs of the third world. The UN has established the Sustainable Development Commission, which will oversee the implementation of Agenda 21. However, without a meaningful commitment, that eminently sensible new office will be starved of resources. It will be unable to carry out its important job of altering the massive resources imbalance in the world.

I agree with what the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) and the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) said about population. The projected population figures make astonishing, frightening reading. The lastest UN projection is a likely population of 8·5 billion by 2025 and 10 billion by 2050—34 per cent. of that increase will occur in Africa. By mid-1992 the world population will be 5·5 billion and it will reach 6 billion by 1998. In the next decade the world population will increase by an average of 97 million a year. We must start to tackle that problem and acknowledge how it relates to the problem of world poverty, but we need aid to do that.

More resources must be devoted to family planning. At present, 1 per cent. of the British Government's overseas development assistance programme is spent on family planning. That figure must be substantially increased, as a matter of urgency, if we are to have any effect on the world's population explosion. The Government should start to work towards doubling the amount of aid we give by 1995, having a target of 4 to 5 per cent. rather than the present 1 per cent. That should be our target by the year 2000. Only by that means shall we make a serious impact on the problem.

The Overseas Development Administration is firmly committed to a policy of reproductive choice, of voluntary —I accept that, wherever possible, it should be voluntary —quality family planning provision to enable women, in the classic phrase, to have children by choice rather than by chance. Finance is needed to breathe life into that concept. I will not say more about family planning, except to reiterate that it is a crucial issue and cannot be divorced from the whole question of overseas aid in the process of addressing world poverty issues.

Much more could have come out of the Rio summit. We must now do our best to build on the organisations that have been established to carry forward Agenda 21. I hope that the British Government will play a meaningful part. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has made a commitment to call a global summit of non-governmental organisations next year to evaluate the progress made in the first 12 months. Evaluating progress must be a continuing process. Only by that means shall we see the direction in which we are going and the progress being made in the aftermath of Rio. Let us hope that what emerges from it will begin to deal with the terrible problems, including the debt, facing the third world.

6.51 pm

**Mrs. Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham): I wish at the outset to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on the strength of his excellent speech. I shall certainly be re-examining my holiday arrangements for this year.

As this is the first time I have addressed the House, I hope that hon. Members will bear with me while I pay tribute to my eminent predecessor and to my constituency. Sir Ian Gilmour was once dubbed the philosopher king, and throughout his distinguished political career he considered deeply all his actions and words. For over 30 years, as the hon. Member for Norfolk, Central, and then the new seat of Chesham and Amersham, he looked to championing the weakest in the community. As a politician, he always stuck to his principles. No one is more delighted than I at his elevation to the other place. We wish him well and, personally, I hope for his advice from time to time, but also his understanding when perhaps I take a different view from his. As a former owner of *The Spectator* and a distinguished author, it is apt that he should have represented the very place in which Milton penned his immortal poem, "Paradise Lost". Milton's cottage nestles in the heart of the Chalfonts, but it is not the least of the many attractions of my picturesque and thriving constituency.

From the beauty of the gardens at Chenies Manor to the charms of the old towns of Chesham and Amersham, from top to bottom it is a gem. Set against the backdrop of the Chiltern hills, we boast many successful businesses,

*[Mrs. Cheryl Gillan]*

among which is the oldest independent building society. Chesham Building Society was founded with assets consisting of a piece of green baize, three wooden cash boxes and a deed box. Now, with assets of more than £60 million, it shows how from humble beginnings a successful business can grow. There is a lesson there for us all.

From Chesham one can travel through the cool woods of Chesham Bois to the epitome of an English country town, Amersham. With Saxon origins, Amersham was for generations the country seat of the Drakes of Shardeloes. William Drake, who represented the area in the Long Parliament, wrote in 1640 a personal diary chronicling the problems of Parliament and the monarchy on the eve of the English civil war, thus providing one of the best insights into that troubled period in our history.

Those who come to my constituency are struck not only by its beauty but by the friendliness and courtesy of my constituents. We believe that it starts at the beginning, and that is reflected in our excellent schools and educational establishments in Buckinghamshire. We pride ourselves in bringing out the best in all our children, equipping them to be valuable members of society, whatever their aptitudes. Indeed, today—at this moment—I should have been present at the leaving ceremony for some of our girls from Dr. Challoner's high school. I take this opportunity to wish them well in their future careers—except, perhaps, if they choose a career on the Opposition Benches.

Although Chesham and Amersham is idyllic, we have some problems, and of concern to us all is an environmental issue. Our two rivers, the Chess and the Misbourne, have all but disappeared, and I am shortly to meet the National Rivers Authority and the water companies to establish a plan of action. Hopefully, it can be achieved on a domestic basis, but many of the environmental problems that we face can be rectified only by global co-operation and action.

From the rivers of my constituency I think of another river, the Amazon, and what was achieved at Rio. Just as the environment was not polluted in a single step, so the clean-up process cannot be achieved by one conference in Rio, however successful it may have been. The first environmental conference took place in Helsinki in 1972 and, to put the debate in perspective, the world's population has grown by 1·5 billion since then.

In 1972 there were few environmental policies and little legislation, but the follow-up to that conference heightened public awareness and resulted in reams of legislation, some of which has been implemented in only a patchy fashion. Our environmental problems have increased since that conference, and everything now depends on the follow-up to Rio. That follow-up will depend not just on our Prime Minister or Secretary of State for the Environment but on all our Ministers. Involvement is needed at every level—in the home, in business, in local government, nationally and intergovernmentally. In some cases our Ministers will have to pursue measures which in the first instance work against the objectives that they may be set in their portfolios. That will be hard, but I believe that every Conservative Minister will rise to the challenge.

Internationally, there is an overriding need to take into account the sensitivity of the developing nations. Rio made it clear to everyone that developing countries see some measures as imposing on them handicaps which the developed nations did not have at the time when they, in their turn, were developing their industries. That, coupled with the myriad Governments and cultures that environmental issues must embrace, means that the continuing process is complicated and calls for a systematic approach and a realisation that our objectives cannot be met by strong-arm tactics.

We face a situation in which we in the United Kingdom excel. It represents a good opportunity for us to build on the world-leading initiatives of our Prime Minister and to play a key role in bringing the various parties and points of view together. The danger is that the impetus could be lost and the fight for the environment, in all its facets—tropical forests, emissions, agricultural pollution and over-population—will start to bore, or at least be treated as a peripheral issue, rather than as a complex and many-sided problem of the utmost importance.

We must also sow the seeds of an enhanced pan-European approach. I hope that the United Kingdom will follow the line that it has suggested and will take advantage of its presidency to expand the co-operation further to include EFTA and eastern and central European countries. It is vital that our co-operation is extended in that fashion, as we all know that pollution does not need a visa to cross borders.

Identifying problems at an early stage and monitoring and policing the global environment is yet another facet of the debate. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's initiative to highlight the role of satellites has been well received. It has spawned several sub-initiatives, and one —perhaps the most important—is the investigation of the complex problems connected with the digesting of data from satellites. As someone said recently, we receive about three times the contents of the British Library every week and, by the end of this century, we are likely to be receiving that quantity of data every day.

Our national remote sensing centre at Farnborough is a unique venture to introduce private sector management and marketing expertise to facilitate the constructive use of that data by all users, not least those involved in seeking to monitor climate change and the environment. It is an excellent example, in the good Conservative tradition, of a public and private sector partnership, and I encourage the Ministers responsible at the Department of the Environment and the Department for Trade and Industry to visit the centre as part of a follow-up to Rio, and seek to expand and enhance that area of technology in which I believe we can lead the world.

It is also important that we try to get the environmental users better organised. Rio has certainly done something to win over industry and, perhaps more cynically, to show it the inevitability of change. The Government must encourage United Kingdom industry to seize the chance of a more efficient use of energy, better emission controls, and a whole raft of subjects connected with using more environmentally friendly technologies. Not only is that an essential component of a modern environmental protection plan, but commercial gain could be made from it for small and large companies. We need to ensure that we produce environmentally efficient goods which tomorrow's consumers will want to buy.

In that area, we may find that our industries discover a good vehicle for joint industrial ventures with developing

countries. It is particularly clear that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Darwin initiative can support international co-operation.

However, an area of international co-operation that is not making progress is the European Environmental Agency. It was agreed at a summit when Margaret Thatcher was still our Prime Minister, but it is being stopped by just one member of the European Community: France is blocking any agreements on community agencies until it receives assurances that Strasbourg will be the seat of the European Parliament. Can we continue to tolerate that situation when the needs of the environment are so pressing? During Wimbledon week, it would be apt to borrow the immortal words of John McEnroe and say to the French, "You can't be serious". I hope that my right hon. Friends will argue robustly against the French position at every opportunity, and especially when Britain assumes the Community presidency in a few days' time.

Finally, in the tradition of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), I return to poetry and to Milton's "Paradise Lost". Sitting in my constituency, Milton described paradise. He wrote:

"Both where the morning sun first warmly smote the open field and where the unpierced shade imbrown'd the noon-tide bowers. Thus was this place a happy rural seat of various views".

He was undoubtedly inspired by the environment of Chesham and Amersham—the "happy rural seat" that I am proud to represent in this House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** I remind the House that Madam Speaker has imposed the 10 minute rule on speeches between 7 o'clock and 9 o'clock.

7.6 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) on her maiden speech and on outlining some of the environmental problems that she sees in her constituency and the rest of the world. May I point out, however, that market forces encourage the high consumption of any commodity, be it water, gas, electricity, coal or whatever, which in turn leads to depletion of those resources. Market forces of themselves do not preserve the environment or the materials whose consumption we seek to reduce. They work in precisely the opposite direction and encourage greater use of them.

In some ways, the success of Rio was the fact that it was held at all. It is essential that all the Governments and agencies of the world recognise that we cannot continue to deplete natural resources and pollute our atmosphere without paying a high price for it. Rio was also the coming together of the north and south, the interface of the world's great problems at present.

For all the honeyed words said by President Bush and others after and during the Rio summit, the reality is that two thirds of the world's population do not enjoy the same standard of life, health care, life expectancy and hope for their children that the other third enjoys. Millions of people around the globe do not enjoy a life expectancy of 60 or 70, but are old at the age of 40. A terrible price is being paid by children throughout the world in infant mortality and death in childhood because of wholly preventable illnesses. That is the reality of the north versus south, which is what the Rio summit was all about.

We cannot continue with a third of the world's population consuming two thirds or more of the world's natural resources and energy production. The United States alone turns out more than a quarter of all the carbon dioxide produced in the world. We simply cannot continue to sustain the planet in that way. So when President Bush talks about protecting American jobs and the American environment—it is the first time that he has ever talked about protecting jobs—he is really saying that in no sense is he prepared to interfere in the economy of the United States to protect the rest of the world. He fails to realise that damage to the ozone layer and increasing world temperatures affect the United States as much as elsewhere.

We must also be wary about talking in grand terms about the transfer of resources from north to south, as though the aid budget were a grand train that transfers resources from the riches to the poorest and helps the poorest develop, because it simply does not. For every £1 in aid that this country gives from all sources to the poorest countries in the world, £4 comes back in either debt repayment or profits of multinational companies. Those same companies and banks are making vast amounts of money through the British tax system in setting aside bad debts of third world countries. So the British banks are making a great deal of money out of writing off debt repayment, or setting aside money for it without doing anything about it and getting a large amount of tax relief as a result. By that process last year, $50 billion more than was transferred from the north to the south was transferred from the south to the banking systems and multinational companies of northern countries. That is wholly unsustainable.

When we speak of the environmental damage that occurs in many countries, such as India, Malaysia and Brazil, we must recognise that often the poorest indigenous people in forest areas pay the price. Last week I had the privilege of meeting a group from the Third World Network based in Penang, Malaysia, who described to me the plight of people in the forest of Sarawak when the logging companies throw them off their land and illegally cut down the trees. The wood ends up in DIY stores of western Europe and north America and as conservatories or extensions. Those people are thrown off their land, which is left as a virtual desert as a result.

The people who have stood up against the rape of their environment have paid a high price. Chico Mendes was a brave man who was murdered. He and his organisation of rubber tapper workers stood up for people who lived and sustained themselves through the forest in Brazil. I do not know who pulled the trigger and killed Chico Mendes—in a sense, it does not matter. What matters is that people like him exert pressure and stand up for the people, and as a result those who take such a stance die.

We must think seriously about the trading relationship between the north and the south if we are to begin to eliminate the abject poverty of those who live in so many parts of the world. What will the future hold if we do not face that reality? It will hold a further transfer of resources from the poorest to the richest and a further deterioration in the living standards of the people of sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. We cannot countenance that and must look to a world that protects and shares its resources, and seeks a sustainable future. I know that many of those sentiments were expressed in Rio, but my worry is whether there will be practical results from it.

*[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]*

The hole in the ozone layer was discovered by Dr. Joe Farmer and others at the British Antarctic Survey, all of whom I had the pleasure of meeting. I think that they do a fine job of research. It was not the British Government who promoted the minerals moratorium in the Antarctic; they pushed through the House the legislation that allowed commercial exploration of the Antarctic. The Madrid protocol put an end to that legislation, and I look forward to an announcement from the Minister this evening on when legislation will be introduced to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 and introduce the proposed moratorium.

For all that has been said about the depletion of the ozone layer and the need to phase out the production of CFCs and HCFCs, insufficient action has been taken. There is an urgent need to recognise the serious health problems caused in the southern parts of South America and northern Europe by the continuing destruction of the ozone layer.

I believe that Greenpeace is right to call for the reconvening of the Montreal convention to bring forward the date on which to end the entire production of CFCs and promote safer substitutes. We need fewer lectures from ICI and others that have made a fortune out of the production of CFCs, and even now seek to continue the production of dangerous gases that can only damage our natural environment.

We are experiencing a climatic change. It is not something that will happen in the future—it is happening now. Desertification is taking place: the Sahara was not always a desert. In Roman times it was the granary of the empire, and the greed of the Roman empire destroyed that region of grain production, turning it into a desert. The greed of militarisation in this country in the middle ages destroyed our forests. Is the greed of the rest of the world now to destroy the forests of Latin America and Asia?

I think that, in some ways, the outcome of the Rio summit is depressing. It has not given the authority to agencies such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development or maintained the operation of the United Nations office that monitors the work of multinational corporations that control 80 per cent. of world trade. Instead, it has agreed a series of proposals —some of which the United States have backed out of —that may help to protect some species and some natural regions, but it has not granted the necessary power to achieve those goals.

At the same time, the same Governments propose policies in which market forces are to be the solution of all economic problems. They also maintain nuclear weapons bases around the world, with a world order based on injustice and unfairness, and held together by military power and control.

I think that the issue that we are debating and the debate are important. But if we do not want to face the prospect in 10 years' time of millions of environmental refugees knocking on the door of western Europe and north America to try to get safe haven, we must react with more urgency and take more positive action than that which has resulted from the Rio summit. We must talk seriously about redistributing resources and wealth, and promoting a sustainable world economy. Those issues will not wait.

7.15 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Circencester and Tewkesbury): I begin by paying tribute to the maiden speeches of two of my hon. Friends, the Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) and for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan). They both made eloquent and fluent speeches, and doubtless we can look forward to many others.

The reason that many commentators have said that the Rio summit was not a success was that the expectations were too high. But the conventions on climate change and biodiversity, which are legally binding, together with the principles for sustainable development and the management of forests, which were not legally binding, are to be greatly welcomed. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his achievements.

We have heard much this evening about Agenda 21. It is to be regretted that the framework for action carrying us into the next century did not include a clear and unequivocal intention to curb the alarming growth in world population. The reasons for that are well known and, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), I have no hesitation in condemning the attitude of the Catholic Church towards contraception.

No less a person than the Reverend Primate, the Archbishop of Canterbury, appealed on 18 May to the Roman Catholic Church to change its doctrinal opposition to birth control. On 22 April, Prince Charles, in his keynote address to the Brundtland commission, said of the population explosion:

"I don't in all logic see how any society can hope to improve its lot when population growth exceeds economic growth."

UNICEF concluded:

"the responsible planning of births is one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth—both now and in the future".

We hear much about global warming, which is not something that will happen in future, but is happening now. As the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, desertification and the elimination of some species are occurring now. Some 21,000 sq km of soil in India have been eroded in the past year alone—the equivalent to taking all the top soil off one of this country's larger counties.

The root cause of environmental damage is twofold: poverty, and excessive growth in world populations. The world population growth is now about 90 million per annum. If we place that in a historical context, the world population was about half a billion at the time of Christ, 2 billion in 1920, and 4 billion in 1960, and it is about 5 billion today. But much more worrying is the fact that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predicts that the figure will roughly double over the next 50 years. We must take those statistics extremely seriously. I am sorry that, in the run-up to the Rio summit, Agenda 21 did not make more declarations on that subject.

Population growth can be tackled only if the countries in which it is taking place have the will to do so. We can give them aid and advice, but in the end it is up to them. We must take the issue seriously; otherwise future populations in those countries will suffer even greater poverty than their parents suffer today. If the countries whose people live at subsistence level are to come close to

meeting the food needs of those people, they will have to increase their agricultural production to levels approaching those of the Americans. That is unimaginable.

It is estimated that 60 per cent. of world deforestation is caused not by logging but by land hunger. It is to be deprecated that third-world countries, often merely to keep corrupt Governments in power, have to plunder their forests not for food but to shore up those Governments.

Some efforts have been made to tackle population growth. Britain's contribution to the overseas family planning programme amounts to 1 per cent. of our overseas development budget. It is to be noted, however, that that percentage has halved since the 1970s, so I urge the ODA to consider doubling it in the next five years. I hope that the Prime Minister's announcement that some new funding will be provided for the environment means that it will be channelled in that direction.

There is a great unmet need for contraception. Depending on one's sources, there are between 100 million and 300 million families in need of some form of family planning, as the leading article in *The Times* said today. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South, I emphasise the words "family planning", not "family control", because the latter has unfortunate connotations. If we could provide the resources to meet the need for contraception, we could reduce the alarming growth in world population by about 30 per cent.—a goal surely worth trying to achieve.

In some countries, contraception has had notable success in reducing the rate of population growth. In Bangladesh, where contraceptives have been made freely available, there has been a significant fall in the birth rate. Thailand is a particularly interesting example; in an effort to encourage birth control, the Government provided the resources for family planning and mounted a mass media campaign, resulting in 68 per cent. of the population using contraception. The average family size fell from just over six in 1969 to about two today.

The leading article in *The Times* uses wizardry of figures to try to prove that the tremendous fall in the average family size throughout the world from about nine to about six shows that great work has already been done, but we need to bring the number down from six to nearer two to tackle the problem. In the developed western world, where average family sizes have shrunk to just over two children, populations have stabilised and some have even gone into marginal decline.

Due to the complexity of population movements and of the subject of human fertility, there is an urgent need for comprehensive, integrated population policies based on careful assessment of population and development factors, of which education is a key one. It is a proven fact that educating women—thereby stopping them going straight out from their families and starting more families—in the third world and delaying the birth of their children means that those children are brought up, educated and fed better, and average family sizes are smaller. It is vital, therefore, to encourage people in the third world to be better educated about these subjects——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I call Mr. Welsh.

7.25 pm

**Mr. Andrew Welsh** (Angus, East): After the Earth summit conference and the inevitable international horse trading, there is at least the certainty that something has been agreed. The task now is to turn the vagueness in the agreements into certainty and to turn clearly worded agreements into reality. Monitoring and ensuring that stated goals are reached within and across international boundaries will be essential if the United Nations Earth summit is to be more than just historical words.

I should like to hear from the Government more explanation of what mechanism they propose for reporting back to the House on progress on set environmental goals and targets. I should like to hear the Government's thinking on the role, status and powers of the United Nations Sustainable Development Commission. Without some sort of system and accountability, fine words will not be enough.

I hope that the Rio conference was a watershed, creating awareness at governmental level and building invaluable contacts and communications networks which will lead to a continuing process of international environmental action. It should not now be necessary to hold regular major conferences if Governments interact and follow through these initiatives at a lower level.

When they happen, future Earth summits should be launch pads for new agreements based on solid, real results. The test for our Government is what they do for the environment in this country and the co-operation that they promote internationally.

There must be disappointment that the United Kingdom cannot even reach its own standard of 0·3 per cent. of GNP spent on aid, let alone the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. The Scottish National party looks on the United Nations aid target as a starting point. Given the urgency of third-world poverty we should aim at 1 per cent. of GNP as soon as possible.

It is to be regretted that short-term electoral considerations seem to have dominated the United States approach to assisting developing nations and to pollution. Although I welcome many of the European initiatives on environmental protection, the problem created by the United States attitude can be seen in the fact that the European Community carbon tax plans are conditional on the United States taking similar measures—yet the EC produces only 8 per cent. of the world's carbon dioxide emissions while the United States is responsible for one quarter of them. The United States has left a massive gap in the Rio agreement and I hope that a settled presidency will lead to the Americans' essential participation and leadership. I also hope that our Government will encourage them in that as much as possible.

Part of the frustration felt by Scots is that until Scotland is independent we can neither safeguard our environment nor put effective pressure on the international community for such action. Scotland possesses many of Europe's environmental treasures, yet there was no Scottish Office representation or participation at the Rio conference. Scotland's voice was not heard, yet we have a lot to offer the world. We know what it is like to be treated as the world's nuclear and toxic dustbin and we have campaigned to prevent developed or developing nations from exporting their environmental problems.

We have immense renewable green energy resources and we would be at the forefront of development of green energy technology, providing much-needed jobs and expertise to help other nations to develop. We know that a Scottish Parliament could provide the political will and

*[Mr. Andrew Welsh]*

finance, and that Scottish universities, colleges and industry can provide the technology to implement such positive programmes.

I look in vain for any similar United Kingdom Government plans for Scotland. There are none, so an opportunity is being wasted.

This whole subject is an international problem based on national action, and it is crucial that environmental problems be solved in situ rather than being exported elsewhere.

Local environmental success must not be at the expense of creating environmental damage elsewhere. For example, green campaigners blocked the operation of a nuclear reactor in the north Rhine-Westphalia area, only to see its spent nuclear fuel sent to Scotland to become a Scottish problem. Campaigns against ozone-damaging chemicals here must not be the harbinger of sales of stockpiles to third world countries. We wish to see an international ban on the transportation of both nuclear and toxic wastes, which will force developed countries to deal with their own problems rather than dumping them on to developing countries, using cash bribes.

The twin aims of policy must be to create codes of environmental practice in developed countries while increasing aid and the transfer of environmentally friendly technology to help under-developed nations regulate their growing industries.

I should like to draw attention briefly to the possibilities inherent in linking a build-up of the Scottish forestry industry and much-needed measures to combat the destruction of tropical rain forests. The problems of tropical rain forest destruction are well known, but there can be a home-grown Scottish contribution to help in this crisis. In addition to conforming to international standards on the environment and aid to developing countries, Scotland can become self-sufficient in timber through a sustainable forestry programme designed to stop imports of tropical woods from endangered areas.

We know that we can grow hardwoods of native species here and not import tropical wood grown as a cash crop in areas of the world that are being denuded by the developing world's poverty and the greed of exploitation. Selling unprocessed wood does not benefit developing nations, since they receive only 9 per cent. of the value of timber when they sell it as logs, but could receive 35 per cent. if they sold it as a finished product. Therefore, they should be encouraged to have smaller and more skilled industries and be given incentives not to destroy one of their best resources. Fruits and latex from an area of tropical forests provide three times the income of cattle ranching for McDonalds in the same area and six times the income of just chopping down the timber. Therefore, with proper development, communities in the developing world can make more money and have a stable and sustainable future by not cutting down their forests.

We can also contribute by a major programme to recycle paper, possibly at the proposed plant at Gartcosh. We have developed industries in Scotland and the north of England that need home-grown timber. That demand can be met until 2020, but after that our production will go into decline because private planting has dropped since tax breaks ended and the Forestry Commission has virtually stopped any acquisition of new land. Therefore, we desperately need a national perspective on future forestry needs.

If we became self-sufficient, we would double forest and woodland cover in Scotland in the next 10 years, from 12 to 24 per cent. of our land, with the possibility of creating tens of thousands of jobs, especially by adding value to the timber produced. Doubling forested areas need not mean mono-cultural landscapes with hills of endless pine trees. We can create broadleaved woodlands, Scots pine forests, and continuous canopy and encourage species diversity to replace some of the native woodland that we have lost —for example, in the north-east and the borders, we have lost up to 40 per cent. of our forests. Work and progress in our country can play a positive part in helping other countries in the less developed parts of the world.

We need a multi-skilled population to encourage afforestation, like Norwegian best practice, where sheep farmers also learn to be foresters. The necessary education can be provided through a university of the highlands, twinned with Tromso in Norway, based in Inverness but with collegiate sites all over the north. Scotland can make a positive contribution to curbing deforestation and cutting emissions of carbon dioxide. We can pledge environmental commitment and have shown the Government some positive practical initiatives. The question is whether the Government can make the same commitment. Clearly, they cannot and that is a wasted opportunity for Scotland and the wider world.

7.34 pm

**Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva** (Brentford and Isleworth): In this, my maiden speech, I stand here honoured and privileged to be speaking in the mother of Parliaments. Coming here, as I do, from a political family in Sri Lanka, I was imbued as a child with the values and ethics of the British parliamentary tradition. As you may know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sri Lanka has a long and distinguished record of parliamentary democracy, which continues uninterrupted to this day under the able stewardship of President Premadasa.

I am proud to be British. I am proud of the British institutions and values that have now transcended national borders, leaving the legacy of the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, the British legal system, constitutional government and the English language as the common framework of governance for 1·5 billion people in 48 nation states. I pay tribute to the historic figures in these Houses of Parliament who toiled to inculcate those fundamental values and encouraged them to spread across the world.

My presence here today as the second Asian Conservative Member of Parliament is a direct consequence of the efforts and endeavours of parliamentary predecessors in the propagation of this valued system of parliamentary democracy across so many countries and cultures, which has resulted in encouraging many millions of former colonial citizens to leave their newly independent countries to seek their future in the mother country here in Britain. I consider this an act of confidence and faith in our British institutions. It is also, undoubtedly, an act of patriotism towards Britain and her future by those who have newly arrived here. They have clearly demonstrated their faith in our system by voting with their feet.

Coming here, as we have done, is not enough. We, too, have our duties and responsibilities to the country that we have adopted as our own, and many of us recognise this. We must work with the rest of the community, not against it. We must work to build a sustainable partnership that will last for generations to come, and we will build that one nation that our Prime Minister has called for, based on talent, merit and opportunity and in which class, colour and religion will have no part to play.

In making my maiden speech, I must thank all the people of Brentford and Isleworth who chose to elect me as their new Member of Parliament in this fourth historic victory for the Conservative party. I take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), who made an amusing speech, and my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), who made a thoughtful speech.

I succeed Sir Barney Hayhoe, now Lord Hayhoe. I hope that I can serve my constituents as well as my distinguished predecessor and friend did. I am sure that the House would wish to join me in congratulating him on his elevation and in wishing him the very best in his new role. Barney Hayhoe served the people of Brentford and Isleworth magnificently for 21 years and is regarded with the greatest affection and respect. His is an example to emulate and I shall be more than satisfied if I am able to retain even a modicum of the affection felt by my constituents and colleagues for Barney Hayhoe over two decades. Barney Hayhoe and I share many common attributes. We are both engineers—a rare breed in this august House. We are also both Catholics. There are also, however, notable differences: for instance, I have a beard.

I am sure that some of my colleagues may be wondering where exactly the constituency of Brentford and Isleworth is, but are too polite to ask. Some of its earliest constituents were the Romans, who found it most appealing. Today, I am sure that many, if not all, of my colleagues have unknowingly driven over or travelled under the constituency on their way to Heathrow airport or the west country. I am delighted to invite my colleagues, when they have time, to leave the M4 and break their journey in this beautiful and historic part of west London. I invite them to take a stroll along its scenic river front, or through some of its many attractive parks—Osterley, Gunnersbury, Syon, Chiswick and Grove, to name but a few—or perhaps to visit one of its many historic buildings and landmarks in Chiswick or Hounslow.

The safe future of the environment, its open spaces and other sites, are vital to my constituents, and I shall guard them most assiduously.

Mine is a multi-racial and cosmopolitan constituency, in which all communities live side by side in harmony. We are an example to the rest of the country.

We are a constituency blessed with modern offices, light industrial estates, some of the most prestigious high-tech companies, a qualified work force and neighbouring Heathrow airport through which 40 million people pass into London each year.

I shall make it my concern to protect our local environment from excessive noise, traffic and air pollution, so that a proper balance is struck between the quality of life in the locality and the economic well-being of my constituents and that of London.

I contribute to the debate as an engineer and an environmental scientist. As users of the planet's resources, we are all responsible for its continued evolution so as to protect the interest of those yet to be born. We are merely the stewards of our planet. That stewardship must be handled with responsibility and balance. We must not destroy economic growth in the developing countries now for an illusory gain in a nebulous future.

Is it not a fact that science has ways of overcoming many problems? As a scientist, I look particularly to the scientific community to give a lead in developing the measures and techniques which will reduce pollution while enabling sustainable growth.

I congratulate my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Minister for Overseas Development on their role in the success of the landmark Rio summit. The Prime Minister's signing of the international convention on climate change and the biodiversity treaty show that we mean business and that we intend to tackle the issues realistically and sensibly.

It is important to remind people that last year we were the fifth largest world aid donor in volume terms, and that this financial year we have increased aid to the developing countries by 8 per cent. in real terms to £1·8 billion.

We have every reason to be proud of our track record, as British aid is recognised internationally for its effectiveness. Our commitment has always been to ensure that aid goes to the countries most in need, and the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has commended us on that.

It is in the same spirit that we should look at the Prime Minister's announcement that we plan to make substantial extra resources available to assist biodiversity, energy efficiency, planning and sustainable agriculture in developing countries. The Prime Minister's Darwin initiative and his commitment to the environment should please those moaning minnies who say that we have not done enough.

Pollution, in whatever form, must be tackled. I accept the principle that the polluter must pay, but it is also important to understand that the general environment fund which has been set up cannot simply be an open-ended commitment by the developed countries to the developing countries. An open-ended commitment without the requisite checks and balances would, as history has shown, lead inevitably to inefficiencies, waste, mismanagement and corruption.

Rather, I would encourage the fund to be used in a manner where a partnership is struck between the donor and the beneficiary. Such partnerships need to evolve so that feasibility studies, robust monitoring, cost controls and real benefits are identified during the progress of the fund's expenditure on environmental improvements.

Environmental protection is not a zero sum game. Whole new industries and technologies will evolve, employing millions of people world wide to implement the measures required to protect our planet. That, in turn, will lead to economic growth in new sectors, both in the developing countries and in the developed countries working in partnership through the transfer of technology and information.

It is an exciting future, a challenge to the whole of mankind as the global village approaches the millenium.

7.43 pm

**Ms. Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) on his maiden speech, which he delivered with great style. It is almost a century since we had a Tory Member of Parliament of Asian origin. I hope that we do not have to wait another century. As the hon. Gentleman reminded me in the Tea Room earlier, the Tory party produced Britain's first Jewish Prime Minister and Britain's first woman Prime Minister. Who knows, it may produce Britain's first Asian Prime Minister. We must wait and see.

Rio was the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and it is on the link between environment and development that I wish to talk this evening. Despite what some Conservative Members have said, the ultimate threat to the environment is poverty. Anyone who is serious about preserving the environment and saving the planet must be serious about poverty.

It is tempting to be cynical about Rio. It was very much a billion dollar extravaganza involving 185 countries over 12 days, battalions of journalists, endless receptions and lunches and, above all, a self-congratulatory tone which, unfortunately, has seeped into some of the Prime Minister's pronouncements.

It has to be noted that Rio did not achieve some of its original objectives. It was supposed to have approved a great many international treaties to clean the atmosphere and protect the world's plant and animal species, but those treaties dwindled to two—the climate change treaty and the bio-diversity treaty. Significantly, the EC environment commissioner, Carlo Ripa Di Meana, who should know a thing or two about such matters, did not go, because he considered it a waste of time.

One cannot talk about Rio without noting just how embarrassing was America's role. For a country which, ever since the Gulf war, has claimed not just economic but moral leadership of the developed world, its role in Rio was frankly embarrassing.

Bush had plenty of rhetoric but he was terrified of regulations with teeth on environmental matters. He refused to consider more aid and was determined to protect the trade, profits and living standards, not to mention the patent rights, of the richest country on earth whatever the cost, even if the cost was suffering throughout the third world.

Not the least of the achievements of Rio—it has not been mentioned this evening—is that, despite all its frills, junketing and posing, it was a sign that the environment is now fairly and squarely on the agenda of professional politicians.

It is worth saying that the environmental issue is, above all, the people's issue. It was ordinary people who fought politicians, such as those of us in the Chamber, to make us take the environment seriously. A decade ago, Conservative Members were sneering at organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. Now they are obliged to master the issue and at least appear to take such matters seriously.

A number of Members have said today that Rio is the first step. It is not the first step at all. Those of us close to the campaigns and issues in our constituencies know that ordinary groups and pressure groups have been campaigning on such issues for many years. It is not the first step but part of a continuing odyssey.

If we are serious about saving the Earth we must also consider how we secure for all the peoples of the Earth —not just President Bush's voters in an election year—a decent living standard. We have to be frank. We can sit here in the Chamber hurling around environmental jargon, such as carbon dioxide emissions, ozone depletion, photochemical smog, acid rain, toxic waste, saving the world, until we are blue in the face, but, even as we speak, there are millions of people in the third world who are concerned about sheer survival.

The gap between the rich and the poor throughout the 1980s has not narrowed; it has increased. To select just one vital statistic—developing countries' share of world exports fell from 31 per cent. in 1950 to 17 per cent. at the beginning of the 1970s.

How can we tell the populations of south and central America, Africa and Asia who are fighting for day-to-day survival not to cut down their rain forests and to hold down their standard of living in order to preserve the environment?

Before I go on I must say something about the population question. I have noted the enthusiasm of Conservative Members, not otherwise noted for their concern about development issues, to jump up and talk about the population issue. I do not deny that population control and family planning are vital issues, particularly in the context of women's health. But let us be clear: over-population is not the root cause of third world poverty and it is not the root cause of environmental degradation. Population is an important issue, and it detracts from that issue to use it to blame the poor for their poverty—or, worse, to use it to take attention away from the root causes of poverty in the third world, which are economic and have to do with the terms of trade.

As I said earlier, if the biggest threat to the environment is poverty, the most important question that arises from the Rio summit is what we are going to do about poverty. The first issue that comes to mind is aid. Other hon. Members have spoken of this country's poor record, and of the fall in the level of aid as a proportion of gross domestic product. It should also be noted that the Government have no timetable for raising the aid budget, and that far too much British aid is given in the form of loans, with interest repayments tied to the purchase of British capital goods.

It is important to realise, however, that aid is by no means the most important issue in regard to sustainable development and economic growth in the third world. It is hypocritical of hon. Members to prate about development and poverty, when they use a later debate to espouse protectionism, for if one practice is damaging the economies of the third world, it is protectionism in the west and in America. There is the protectionism of the EEC: French, German and—oh, yes—British politicians find it expedient to protect the living standards of rich western farmers at the expense of the poor in the third world, who need to export. I cannot ignore this opportunity to remind the Minister of the importance of defending access to European markets for Caribbean bananas and sugar. Without that EEC market, many countries in the eastern Caribbean would face economic collapse.

There is also the GATT round. It is easy to shed tears for the poor of the third world and for the rain forests; it is more difficult to face up to the hard political issues, and to tell our constituents that we, as one of the richer countries, must move away from protectionism. If we are serious about development, however, we must be serious about tackling protectionism: we can retain protectionism only at the expense of the living standards of people in the third world who are desperately seeking a market for their products.

Debt is also important. Far more than aid shortages, debt is a tremendous millstone around the necks of third-world countries. How can such countries help themselves and stand on their own two feet when such a huge proportion of their gross domestic product goes towards paying the interest on debts? If the House and the Government are serious about the environment and about poverty, they must consider debt reduction—not only write-offs by the commercial banks, but write-offs by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank. They must also consider the overall role of the IMF and its structural adjustment policies.

It has proved expedient to write off the debts of Poland and Hungary because those poor eastern European countries apparently cannot struggle off their knees while still saddled with the burden of debt. Surely we have a moral imperative to give serious consideration to writing off the debts of some of the poorest countries on earth —countries in South America, Central America, Africa and Asia.

In many ways, politicians see the environment as a soft issue——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Lady's time is up.

7.53 pm

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Worcester): I find it slightly surprising that, in my first speech in the House, I should feel moved to congratulate the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on drawing attention to the Conservative party's excellent record on equal opportunities down the centuries.

The natural deference that I feel has been greatly increased by the excellent contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) and for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), but I am still grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me this evening. It is particularly appropriate that I should speak for the first time in today's debate, because—as many hon. Members will recall—my distinguished predecessor Peter Walker, Member of Parliament for Worcester for 31 years, was the first Secretary of State for the Environment, bringing energy and zeal to the task of championing the cause of a better environment for all.

Not surprisingly, in his maiden speech Peter Walker spoke at length about economic issues, but with particular reference to the development of the Commonwealth countries—on the grounds not only of our own commercial self-interest, but of the moral necessity of such development.

If I had a pound for every time someone in my constituency had told me in the past couple of years that I had a difficult act to follow, I should be a rich man today. I cannot say that I was always grateful to such people for drawing my attention to the difficulty of following Peter Walker's act, but let me say it myself this evening: he is indeed a hard act to follow. He was one of the most outstanding constituency Members the House has seen, and also an outstanding parliamentarian, serving more time in Cabinets and shadow Cabinets than almost any of his colleagues. It is right for me also to mention the gratitude of the people of Worcester to his wife Tessa for the excellent support that she gave him throughout much of his time as Member of Parliament for Worcester.

I am sure that every hon. Member will share my pleasure that Peter Walker is to be elevated to another place shortly, and also that his public service is to continue when he becomes chairman of the currently putative urban regeneration agency. Legislation to create the agency will come before the House later in the year. Those in the inner cities will have particular cause to be grateful to him when he fulfils that role. I am sure that the energy that he will bring to improving the environment and lifestyle of those people will be a lasting testimonial to him, as will his work in all the great Departments of state that he has served.

I had the great privilege of working with Mr. Walker for a number of years, and I knew something of his style of debate. It comes as no surprise to me to discover that, in his maiden speech, he made what he characteristically described as

"constructive criticisms of the Government's economic policy".

He said:

"I hope . . . that this will not be considered indicative of a person representing a constituency noted throughout the world for its production of sauce. Indeed, in Worcestershire, we do not live by sauce alone. In fact, we have in the constituency of Worcester probably a greater diversity of industry and mixture of farming than any other constituency in the country."—[*Official Report*, 20 April 1961; Vol. 638, c. 1432-33.]

Peter Walker's words are as true today as they were 31 years ago. It is true that the economy of Worcester has suffered from the current recession, but I think it right to focus on the encouraging signs that we see there today. Many well-known family names operate in Worcester, as other hon. Members were keen to remind me when I was preparing my speech. I have already alluded to Lea and Perrins. We also have Royal Worcester Porcelain and Kays Mail Order Services. We also have home-grown names, of which hon. Members will probably hear much more in the future: Worcester Heat Systems, for instance, is an outstanding engineering operation, and we are the proud recipients of a major piece of Japanese inward investment in the shape of Yamazaki Machine Tools, which has one of the most advanced factories that I have had the privilege of touring.

We also have some small and growing businesses, one of which—the Jolly Roger Brewery—is the subject of an early-day motion in my name. Perhaps I may take this opportunity of asking hon. Members to add their names to that motion, which calls for the brewery's beers to be served in the bars of the House of Commons. This being the 350th anniversary of the outbreak of the civil war, which began and ended in Worcester, the most appropriate would be the brewery's civil war commemorative ale, which I commend to all hon. Members. Recommending that beer is an act of curious political generosity on my part, as one of the brewery's proprietors had the temerity to stand against me in the general election under the hat of the Jolly Small Brewers party.

*[Mr. Peter Luff]*

The constituency also contains some historic firms. I am thinking particularly of *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, the oldest newspaper in the world in continuous publication—and, of course, the traditional agricultural industries, about which I shall say more later.

Worcester is also famous for its contribution to cultural life. Here I think especially of Sir Edward Elgar. I count myself something of a pro-European by the standards of today's debate, but I must say that I have a rather deeper understanding of some of my so-called Euro-sceptic colleagues when I hear the more patriotic strains of Elgar's music.

Given the sporting predilections of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I should highlight the sporting achievements of Worcestershire county cricket club. I hope that I shall have the privilege of luring him to New Road before too long to see Worcester maintain its new-found unbroken run of victories in the county championship.

What encouraged me as the prospective candidate, and now as the new Member of Parliament, for Worcester—the faithful city—is the strength of social concern and religious life in the city. We have an unparalleled wide range of voluntary groups seeking to protect the interests of people not only at home and in Worcester but internationally. I welcome the active contributions to debates on development and environmental issues of members of all faiths in Worcester and particularly of the Council of Churches which ensured, before and during my campaign and subsequently, that I paid great attention to the issues that we are debating, and my postbag has been most full with calls for a perpetuation of the ban on commercial whaling—a ban which I strongly endorse.

Those people were knocking on an open door because of my experiences with two other distinguished national politicians, the first of whom is my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) who, sadly, cannot be here this evening due to a temporary indisposition. I am sure that the whole House wishes him a speedy recovery. I worked with him at the time of the publication of the Brandt report, one of the first major documents which restarted the momentum on development in our political debate.

I also had the privilege of working with Lord Young of Graffham when he was Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in the early days of the GATT round, which, I am glad to say, has now restarted after a rather sticky period and since the successful resolution of agricultural protection issues.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his predecessor on the priority that they attached to the issues that we are debating and on our approach to the Rio summit. We were right to stick to the 0·7 target of GDP for aid to the developing world and to emphasise that quality, debt, private investment and free trade are important dimensions of the major contribution that Britain has made to development issues. I welcome the commitment and continuing presence of my right hon. Friend Lady Chalker at the Overseas Development Administration, and I am sure that no one in Government is better qualified to capitalise on the new momentum generated by the Rio summit.

I should like to follow the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North, not by quoting poetry but by drawing attention to rather more domestic environmental issues. The agricultural community in my constituency often feels that it is misunderstood. There is a rather worrying misunderstanding between town and country. I maintain that members of the agricultural community are the true custodians of the landscape of this country. Maintaining their agricultural incomes is the key to maintaining the quality of the landscape that we are so privileged to enjoy in Worcestershire, and I hope that the common agricultural policy reform package will achieve precisely that. It is right to remember that the countryside belongs to people who live and work in it and not just to those from towns who seek to enjoy it.

There is no more pressing environmental issue for many than the quality of housing. Owner-occupation has grown rapidly in this country, which I welcome, but homelessness is a serious problem in Worcestershire and I hope that measures will be introduced to boost housing associations and the private rented sector.

A local environmental issue that perhaps is of more relevance to the Rio summit is the need for good and effective public transport. I welcome the recent investment in the Cotswold line and the commitment that the Government and Network SouthEast have shown to improving services between Worcester and London. I shall return to that subject in future debates.

My theme is that smaller environmental issues affecting ordinary people are just as important as the big ones——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's maiden speech, but it is a case of "No. 1, your time is up."

8.3 pm

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones** (Cardiff, Central): I congratulate the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) on his maiden speech. He reminded us of his predecessor, Peter Walker. I remind him that Peter Walker was not unconnected with my constituency as he worked at the Welsh Office. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not follow him there.

The United Nations and most, but not all, of its constituent members should be congratulated on their success in holding a summit conference on the environment and on achieving some agreement at it. However, if Rio's success is to be measured by the degree to which they moved towards the objective of sustainable development on this planet, it was limited indeed.

I first became involved in the environmental movement when I joined Friends of the Earth as a student in 1973, after reading a book entitled "Did We Save the Earth at Stockholm?" on the first environmental conference. The book's overwhelming conclusion was no. Twenty years later, if Friends of the Earth published a book, "Did We Save the Earth at Rio?", the answer would have to remain as firmly negative.

In respect of the Earth's immense history, the past 20 years are a mere twinkling and would not be thought to matter much, but in terms of the amount of change in the Earth's biosphere, the past 20 years have been significant indeed and have seen a greater rate of flux than perhaps at any time in our planet's life. I say "planet's life', because many ecologists now find it reasonable to refer to the planet as though it were a living organism with a life of its own.

The Gaia hypothesis, so called, is a useful intellectual tool to examine the Earth's problems. In the past 20 years, the thin habitable skin that covers the globe has seen a probable half degree rise in mean temperature. It has lost a significant part of its remaining forest and has seen a reduction of 15 per cent. or more in its polar ice cover in the northern hemisphere. It has seen the development of northern and southern holes in its protective ozone layer. It has lost significant proportions of its fertile soil to erosion and has seen the quickening growth of deserts. It has seen industrial pollution more than double and the population of the organism responsible for that—the dominant animal on the land surface—increase from 3·5 billion to 5·5 billion today.

Twenty years is not a long time for all that to happen, but at this rate of change the Earth, or its biosphere, will not have long left. The biosphere will remain, but not in the form that it is now or in a form that can sustain as many human beings who now live on it, let alone those who will live on it.

The rate of change is indeed quick, but it is not a constant rate of change. As the world's population continues to expand, demands on the planet's resources grow with it and the overall consumption of resources by each member of the population grows. Therefore, planetary change is accelerating at an exponential rate. No system can endure such demands for long, certainly no natural system.

Rio failed to meet its responsibilities. By not even discussing population, it failed to address the most central of all the problems set before it. The Minister referred to Rio embarking on the start of an evolutionary process to prevent damage to the Earth. The phrase that he used may indeed be accurate. It reveals the problem. The world's biosphere is not embarked on an evolutionary process; it is embarked on a revolutionary one.

The most significant agreement reached at Rio was on the control of total carbon emissions, but according to the most optimistic forecast, even if countries meet their obligations, total emissions are set to increase by a fifth before the end of the millennium. At the rate of evolutionary slowing down, total emissions will double in the next 30 years at a revolutionary pace. The conditional targets set by Britain are inadequate. Why does not the Minister adopt the unilateral action taken by countries such as Denmark and Holland or even reduce total targets for carbon emissions, as New Zealand has done?

As the very first country to embark on an industrial revolution, should not we be the first to begin the environmental revolution and not use evolution as a way of opting out of our true responsibilities?

8.10 pm

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. I should like to be the first Conservative Member to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) on an excellent maiden speech of some quality but laced with humour, which is always an excellent way to begin in the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) asked, did we save the world at Rio? Although I listened carefully, I am not sure what his answer was, but I think that he answered his own question by saying no. Clearly, we did not save the world at Rio, but we made a most promising start.

One of the most encouraging aspects of the past five or 10 years is the attitude of our young people towards the environment. Many youngsters were interested in the Rio conference. My children, aged 11 and 10, are very environmentally aware in a way that I was not at that age, and I find it very encouraging. When I changed my car a year or 18 months ago, my children insisted that I bought one that ran on unleaded petrol. They blackmailed me by saying that they would refuse to ride in the car if it did not use unleaded petrol. It may be only a small gesture, but such attitudes are beginning to prevail, which is encouraging. Much credit for that must go to programmes such as John Craven's "Newsround" and other excellent educational programmes which project the environmental message.

I wish to mention two specific aspects of the Rio conference. The first is overseas aid. I am not sure that it was thrashed out at Rio as much as it might have been, as it is clearly significant for this country. I have strong views on the subject and firmly believe that it is wrong to spend taxpayers' money on propping up or assisting corrupt or inefficient third-world countries and Governments. We must be clear about our thinking on this issue.

Earlier this week, I was happy to lunch with an old colleague from university who now lives in Zimbabwe. He told me that Zimbabwe or Zambia recently borrowed a great deal of money from the European bank for reconstruction and development at an interest rate of 3 or 4 per cent. Lending money to a third-world country at that rate of interest sounds wonderful, but my colleague said that that country's Government are lending the money on again to various commercial projects at commercial rates of interest. The Government are keeping the difference, which is a substantial sum. With that low interest loan, which I believe is called a soft loan, we are in effect giving money to a Government who may be highly inefficient and we have no control over what they spend their money on.

We must consider overseas aid very carefully. Wherever possible, we should ensure that our money reaches the project for which it was intended. Perhaps that can be done directly, although one can understand the difficulties of interfering directly in the affairs of another country when lending or giving money to a new village project or new factory projects. Perhaps we could become involved through the agencies which already exist and which know the countries well.

It is very difficult to give wisely from a distance, but it is important to ensure that we are not propping up inefficient or corrupt Governments. I was encouraged to learn that our excellent Minister for Overseas Development, Lady Chalker, re-emphasised that point when she said recently:

> "The promotion of good government is as much about carrots as sticks. Where the principles of good government are deliberately and persistently flouted, all aid except for humanitarian purposes can and will be cut off."

That may seem tough, but it is important to be clear in our thinking.

A second aspect is our relations generally with third-world countries. We sometimes suffer from an immense sense of guilt about what we as a nation have done in the past few hundred years. One might say, "Rightly so", and I should be the first to agree that this

*[Mr. Gary Streeter]*

country has done some shameful things to other countries. I was amazed to learn that slave trading was abolished only about 200 years ago. It is absolutely incredible to think that only 200 years ago we were party to the buying and selling of other human beings, irrespective of colour or origin.

We as a nation have been involved in some pretty awful practices, but that sometimes colours our approach to our relationships with third-world and developing nations now. However, the past is the past and we must put it behind us. We must learn how to build a proper relationship with third-world and developing countries now.

One of the most important lessons to be learnt is that different is not wrong. We must learn to respect other cultures. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the great missionary movement of the early Church used to export not only Christianity but our culture, and it did not work. Different is not wrong, and we must respect the diversity of the cultures of other nations.

I shall use the remaining minutes allowed to me to deal with our approach to building proper relationships with the developing world. First, as I said, it is important that we do not prop up inefficient Governments. Secondly, we must do something about the debt burden. It is nonsense to continue to require nations to pay us interest and to repay capital when they do not have the money to do so.

Thirdly, we must encourage the developing nations to help themselves. That principle runs all the way through our Conservative philosophy. We encourage the poeople of this nation to help themselves, and the same principle is applicable to third world nations. It is no good lending money and allowing nations to spend it on whatever they want. It is important to encourage third world agriculture and enterprise, new factories and new business. That should be our approach to third world aid.

I hope that I know a little about farming because I was brought up on a farm. I know that one gets from the soil what one puts in, and we must help the developing countries to use the right ingredients in their farming to get out of the soil that which will sustain a viable crop and their animal stocks. Such issues need to be considered in a radical way, although I was encouraged by the progress made at Rio.

My final subject is global warming and some of the potential disasters facing the planet. One of the things about which I feel most strongly is that the greatest threat of all to the planet is over-population. Too many people are chasing the world's finite resources. We hear of incredible problems coming out of India and Africa. How many of those problems are exacerbated by over-population? We need to address our minds urgently to encouraging a new approach, a new culture, and a fresh look at some of the ideological reasons why family planning and contraception are not as widespread as one would like.

It is important that we as a nation seek to persuade other countries to get to grips with family planning issues. This country may have adequate family planning; we may not experience over-population here—but we all inhabit the same planet as the other nations which have those massive problems.

**Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** I thank the hon. Member for giving way——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but I was about to call the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) to order under the 10-minute rule, so I am afraid that what the hon. Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) wants to say cannot be dealt with now.

8.20 pm

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the chance to make a few comments in the second debate on the Earth summit. We have heard some good speeches from both sides of the House, and I congratulate the hon. Members who have made maiden speeches—the hon. Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva), and for Worcester (Mr. Luff).

I was pleased that there was discussion during the Rio summit on the global warming convention, and broad agreement. It has taken 10 to 20 years for the scientists who found the evidence to persuade politicians and the people who matter that the planet faces a major problem. If nothing else, at least the preparatory conferences for Rio and the agreement reached recognised that a tremendous challenge faces us over the next few decades.

It would be one step in the right direction if we could achieve stabilisation by the year 2000. Unfortunately, the commitment to stabilisation is not legally binding. The legally binding commitment was dropped on the insistence of the United States. Earlier in the debate, in exchanges between the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), I noticed some weasel words on the part of the Department of the Environment and of this country—and, I dare say, on the part of the United States and some of the other countries which signed the treaty.

I wish that a Minister from the Department of the Environment were here to wind up the debate, but perhaps the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who is here, will relay my question to the Department of the Environment. How binding is the commitment to stabilisation by the year 2000? I know that it is not legally binding, but do the Government feel tied by the agreement? If they do, the Department should publish plans showing how it intends to achieve the target.

Some of the measures on energy efficiency which the Government should adopt were summarised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury. The Opposition have many ideas, and so have the representatives of non-governmental organisations, such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the Association for the Conservation of Energy. The Department is honour bound to publish plans on how it intends to achieve stabilisation by the year 2000.

I noted that my neighbour, the hon. Member for Cerdigion and Pembroke (Mr. Dafis), said in an intervention that stabilisation was not enough. Stabilisation is a good euphemistic word, because it implies some kind of steady state, but that is not the case —stabilisation is just the difficult first step. The next step is even more difficult. All that stabilisation means is that in the year 2000 the output of carbon dioxide will be no higher than in 1990. However, the total amount of carbon

dioxide in the atmosphere will go on increasing. Cuts of about 60 per cent. in carbon dioxide emissions will be needed in the early party of the next century if we are to avoid the worst dangers of global warming.

We were all disappointed by the role of the United States at Rio. It was the United States which vetoed the binding commitment on carbon dioxide emissions, and which refused to sign the biodiversity treaty. It is sad to see the United States taking such a position, because over the decades that country has taught us a great deal about environmental protection. It set up an environmental protection agency decades ago. On motor exhaust fumes, unleaded petrol, catalytic converters, energy efficiency, and so on, the United States policy of least-cost planning should be adopted here. On its internal environment the United States has a lot to be proud of, and the world can learn a lot from it. We were therefore especially disappointed to see the United States taking such a recalcitrant role in the preparations for the summit—especially, as a Conservative Member said, in view of the Gulf war and the United States' role as leader of the new world order rather than simply as an economic superpower. At the Rio summit the United States failed badly in terms of that leadership. Let us hope that that was only a temporary blip caused by the presidential election. If there is a change of leadership soon, perhaps the United States will resume its normal course on environmental issues.

Unfortunately, in the preparatory stages, Britain hid behind the skirts of the United States and used that country's veto as an excuse to slow down what the other European countries wanted to do.

One good piece of news that came out of the summit was the attitude of Japan, with its enormous balance of payments surpluses and billions of dollars to spend in the world economy. Japan was the most willing to put that money to good account in relation to the environment and development. It is a pity that other countries were not willing to invest the same megabucks as Japan.

Germany is showing us in Europe a great deal on environmental issues, despite the economic problems of reunification. It is sad that Britain cannot be there with Germany in the forefront of progress in the EC.

I shall say something about the aid budget and Agenda 21. In the preparatory stages, the bill for the biodiversity treaty and for the kind of support that developing countries wanted was estimated at about $125 billion. It is disappointing to see at the end of the summit pledged aid of only about $6 billion—barely 4 or 5 per cent. of what is needed to tackle the problems. Britain's extra contribution to the global environment facility of £100 million sounds good, and I am pleased that it is new money—we are assured that that £100 million is extra to the overseas development budget—but £100 million is only 0·02 per cent. of our gross domestic product and it does not go one tenth of the way to make up for the savage cuts made in that budget in the early 1980s.

I think that I can speak for everyone in the House when I say that during our formative years the great fear was the east-west cold war confrontation—Russia and communism versus capitalism. As an insurance policy, we used to devote 4 or 5 per cent. or more of our wealth towards defending ourselves against that calamity. It is marvellous to see the changes that have taken place in eastern Europe in the last few years. That has released a new peace dividend. I know that there are many calls on the money. The purpose of the expenditure on defence was to protect us. Over the next 10 or 20 years, in an atmosphere of far more co-operation in which we can live at peace with one another internationally, I hope that defence expenditure can come down to 4 per cent., then to 3 per cent. and, in 10 or 20 years, to 2 per cent. of our wealth.

The major calls on the peace dividend must be the north-south divide and the global environment. I urge that point and I am sure that the consensus view in Britain is that problems of the global environment and problems of developing countries are of such a size that we should devote not just 0·32 per cent. of our wealth to them, but 1 per cent. or even 2 per cent. within the next decade.

8.30 pm

**Mr. Hartley Booth** (Finchley): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is not here, on helping to lead the world to the meeting in Rio. I pay great tribute to him and to the other world leaders who started the initiative. The fact that 114 leaders came together on such an important topic was in itself a great achievement.

I will adress the financial consequences of the four or five issues that follow from Rio. It behoves those of us who are concerned about the environment to apply our minds to how we should pay for improvements in the world environment. First, there is the global environment facility and, secondly, the question of dealing with world poverty. Unless we deal with that problem, we shall not be able to deal with the environment.

The third issue was not addressed in Rio. I hope that the message going out from this Parliament will be that it is necessary to look for ways of identifying self-interest so that the countries that are concerned about the environment can persuade poorer countries that they have means at their own disposal to improve the environment. Fourthly, there is the question of compensation, which was touched on by some of my colleagues and, fifthly, there is recycling, which was debated at length and with great wisdom last Friday in the House.

The global environment facility will remain as the sole multinational body to finance signed conventions. We have all been told that $2 billion to $3 billion of extra money will be committed to that. The United Kingdom's role in providing £100 million towards that is significant, but should also be seen in the context of what we have provided for some years.

In the 1980s, for example we provided £800 million to improve the way in which our power stations operated. They had been heavily criticised for pumping out sulphur dioxide and carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. That £800 million, little noised abroad and little known about, was part of the major achievement of the 1980s of improving our environment and the world environment. The emissions used to be swept up into the upper atmosphere and then across to Europe or North America. In Rio, we are building on what has been done before, not least by this country. We, especially the Conservative party, have a proud record in the area, which goes back over 100 years of environmental legislation.

The way in which we must tackle world poverty has been addressed by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. In Canada, he helped to lead the challenge of the world debt rescheduling. His seeking to have the £17

*[Mr. Hartley Booth]*

billion rescheduled was a major step. I hope that it will be built on in future and that other countries will push the matter forward.

We have accepted that 0·7 per cent. of gross national product will go to help the third world, which is also important. What is rarely said is that people in this country who give voluntarily to the third world should have their gifts aggregated with the 0·3 per cent. of GNP which we already give. If one aggregates the two parts or our donations, we already meet the United Nations target—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may cough. Those who give voluntarily should not be denigrated. Conservative Members believe that to give to charity is a proud thing and we are not ashamed of that.

Self-interest is the third aspect of the matter. If we consider the Ngorongoro crater or the parts of Africa where ivory is still sought by the hunters, what stares us in the face is the pressing need for the countries involved to see tourism as their goal. They would not then destroy their elephants, but would instead see hotels and the money that flows from tourism as a far better source of revenue than secretly selling ivory on the Hong Kong market or elsewhere. We need to find ways in which to explain to poorer countries that it is in their interests to improve their environment.

The other matter of relevance to finance is compensation. Conservative Members have been proud to push through an economic policy based on the free market. One apparent exception from the free market is compensation, although it does not deviate from the free-market concept. It adds to it and is highly relevant for all areas of the environment. It is important in removing the pollution in inner cities, with which I have dealt, in removing the pollution left by wasteful businesses in the past and in removing pollution from what is being pushed into the upper atmosphere by negligent businesses around the world.

It behoves Heads of Government and those of us who are concerned about the environment to get together to ensure that there is international agreement on how we shall extract compensation from those who are responsible for soiling our world environment.

8.37 pm

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie): In preparing for the debate, I was extremely disappointed by the Rio summit because it ignored the population issue. When I heard speeches from the Front Benches, I feared that that trend would continue. In fact, contributions from the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), from the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel), from the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), from my hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones) and for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) and from the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) have meant that it has been the most frequently mentioned theme in the debate, which is gratifying.

I cannot believe that any of the other problems can be solved unless spiralling population growth is brought under control. I cannot see how it is possible to deal with world pollution, with the depletion of the ozone layer or with global warming; I cannot see how it is possible to get health improvements and water improvements; I cannot see how it is possible to deal with the problems of desertification or land degradation; I cannot see how it is possible to deal with the problem of migration and refugees; and I cannot see how it is possible to deal with fossil fuel depletion or, above all, with poverty unless we deal with the issue of population growth. Unless we can stabilise the population, the whole global life support system is threatened.

It is certain that the population will double by the middle of the next century. The fathers and mothers who will bring that about have already been born. If the population of the world doubles in the next 60 years, we know that it will go up by three or four times in the poorest sections of the world. More than 90 per cent. of the growth will be in the poorest sections of the world. The population of Ethiopia has increased from 20 million to 50 million since 1950.

People say in a callous way that famine will deal with the problem of population. But the 0·5 million people who died in Ethiopia in the famine of 1983-84 were replaced within six months. In Bangladesh, there were 312 people per square kilometre in 1950. By 2025, there will be 1,755 per square kilometre.

The future growth of the population is not conjecture. There will be a juggernaut of population growth for the next 50 to 100 years—it depends on how quickly we can turn it round. Why are we not reacting to population growth? It seems that we do not want to upset people, yet sometimes it becomes offensive not to speak simply because it would upset someone. If one is beside someone who is driving over a cliff, one ought at least to speak.

It seems that the people whom we are not to upset are the Americans, the Catholic Church and some sections of the Muslim world. In America, it is election year and President Bush is frightened of the pro-life movement. Shamefully, he contributes nothing to UNFPA—the United Nations population fund—or the International Planned Parenthood Federation. The pro-life issue must be dealt with. It seems to me a strange interpretation of "pro-life" that condemns millions upon millions of people to a nasty, short and brutish life and a grossly premature death. If one must choose a pro-life way of controlling the population, I choose family planning over starvation every time.

Other hon. Members have condemned the Catholic Church. I do not. I understand that its motives are of the highest morality and that it seeks to respect human life as much as human life deserves to be respected. But I ask the Catholic Church to think again. I do not believe that it is an act of love to destroy the world by giving it too many mouths to feed.

There is an extra dimension to the position of the Catholic Church on family planning. Catholics in Britain, in Europe and in the United States control their family sizes in much the same way as everyone else. The falling rolls in Catholic schools are exactly the same as in non-denominational schools. There is something morally objectionable about first-world Churchmen telling third-world paupers, "Do as I say, not as I do."

The position is not yet hopeless. A growing list of countries are turning their populations around. Thailand has been mentioned several times. But we must always stress the voluntary dimension: people must be given the choice. Listening to the debate, especially the speeches from Conservative Members, one receives the impression

that the whole problem would be solved if condom depots were strategically placed everywhere. It is not so simple as that. Every family planning association in the world will say that that suggestion is nonsense. It takes a great deal of hard and patient work.

The centre point of activity must be the health and education of women. Women and their status must be at the centre of what we do. Women must be given the choice. Almost inevitably, in country after country in the world, if given the choice, women will choose to become a work unit rather than be simply a provider of work units. They will choose not to be defined by their sex. They will choose to have the same range of choices as men. We have only to compare the state of Kerala in southern India, where women's literacy, a falling birth rate and economic growth go together, with the mess in the northern Indian states.

I congratulate the Government—this hurts—on one matter. Baroness Chalker seems to understand the importance of family planning activities. Unfortunately, with the pittance that she is given by the Government, she must divert money to family planning activities from too small a budget. I hope that she will be successful in her attempt to obtain more money from the Government. There is no getting away from the need for family planning.

The hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) said that we should count the voluntary contributions made by the British people in Britain's total contribution. However, that is not what the United Nations says. It says that 0·7 per cent. of gross national product should be given by the Government. In all countries, people give donations privately. We cannot get away from the fact that, in 1979, we gave 0·51 per cent. of GNP in overseas aid. That fell to 0·27 per cent. last year. It has now risen to 0·3 per cent.

We must increase the amount of money spent on overseas aid and ensure that we are not frightened to speak out about population. We should regard population as a key issue in the environment and development debate.

8.45 pm

**Mr. Iain Sproat** (Harwich): I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to speak in this important debate. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). Conservative Members were extremely grateful for the generous compliments that he paid to my noble Friend Baroness Chalker.

The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not follow him in discussing what the Catholic church ought or ought not to recommend. I understand that we have only 10 minutes at this stage of the debate, so I shall cut my remarks short and concentrate on two aspects of the subject. The first is the amount of overseas aid that Britain gives and the way in which it has given it, before, during and following the Rio conference. Then I wish to say something about monitoring of aid. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies he will tell us a little more about exactly how that monitoring will be done in practice.

I wish to speak about overseas aid, because frequently —certainly at some of the meetings that I held during the recent general election campaign—there has been tremendous and entirely unjustified criticism of the Conservative party's record on overseas aid. It is right to put it on record that Britain gives the sixth largest amount of overseas aid of any country in the world. That is a record of which we can be proud. However, it is not simply the amount of money that we give that counts; it is to whom we give it and the projects at which we direct it.

We give a vast amount of money. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would like more money to be given, but, none the less, we give the sixth largest amount in the world. It is also fair to say that, more than most countries, Britain directs its aid to the poorest countries. Some people say that overseas aid should always or frequently be directed at countries that can provide some commercial benefit in return. Overseas aid is seen as a way to buy back benefits for this country. That is certainly a serious argument. Whether it is right or wrong, the fact is that no one can take the high moral line with this country and say, "You are only giving overseas aid because you get something back." We clearly do not. Our aid is directed at the poorest countries, from which we cannot hope to get a return on such an investment for many years to come —if one cares to view it that way. Whatever else may be criticised about our overseas aid programme, no one can criticise us for not behaving with a high morality.

I do not know when the policy started, but all the projects that benefit from British overseas aid are checked and monitored for their ecological effect. Once again, all those people who may be disposed to criticise the Conservative party for not being sufficiently ecology minded or for not giving enough money ought to realise that we give a large amount of money to the poorest countries in the world and, as far as we are able, we ensure that ecological damage does not flow from the money that we give. I want to put that on the record.

My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker recently put aside about £50 million within our overseas aid budget to encourage good government, as we see it, and good democratic practices in other countries. I welcome that very much. It might be said that that is linking overseas aid to something, but it is linking it to democratic practices, rather than directly to commerce. I should have thought that that would commend itself to both sides of the House.

I have been checking on a number of recent projects that will benefit from that £50 million budget which my right hon. and noble Friend is setting aside. In Zambia, about £5 million is to be spent on developing local government structures. In Zimbabwe £1·4 million is being provided for police training. In Uganda about £780,000 is being made available to improve the judicial system and, in Nepal and Bangladesh, about £50,000 has been set aside to help to ensure free and democratic elections. That is a sensible way to direct overseas aid. My right hon. and noble Friend, the Government and previous Conservative Governments ought to take full credit for that.

People, both in the House and outside it, who are disposed to criticise the Government should remember what we have done. Even though they may say that we should do more, let them remember that it is no mean position to be the sixth largest donor in the world.

I listened to the extremely interesting speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) with great attention. He said that although our country—and almost every other country; no doubt my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give us the figures—has not reached the United Nations target, we have gone a long way towards it, and private charities should rightly to be taken into account.

**Dr. Roger Berry** (Kingswood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Sproat:** I only have a few minutes left.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** One minute.

**Mr. Sproat:** Do I have one minute left, Madam Deputy Speaker? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me on this occasion. He can make a speech another time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Finchley mentioned the word charity. As the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said, the UN did not include in its percentage a contribution from the private sector. In this country we have a tradition of private giving to charity which is not common throughout the world. Obviously, people in other countries do it, but we have a strong tradition of private giving to charity. It is quite wrong to write that down or to push it to one side. In many ways, giving out of one's private pocket takes a higher degree of virtue than coughing up from corporate funds, or passing a motion in the House to give money from Government funds. My hon. Friend rightly said that private charities should be taken into account and we British can be proud of what we give, both as a Government and privately.

Since my time is drawing to a close I must mention monitoring. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister took a lead by going to Rio. People criticise the Conservative party, but my right hon. Friend was one of the first to make it clear that he would go, when European Commissioners were saying that they would not. It is typical of him that he said that it was all very well to stand up at a publicised conference in the presence of television cameras and the journalists of the world and say, "We will do this", and to make ever more grandiose promises. My hon. Friends have listed the promises that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that we would fulfil, but he said more than that. He said that we would monitor what we do and what others do. I hope that in one and two years' time the House will have the opportunity to find out what the British Government have done and which of the Governments who made grandiose promises have come up to them. Of one thing I am sure—the British Government will be one of those who come up to their promises.

8.56 pm

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Paolo e Tarso Flecha de Lima, the Brazilian ambassador who did so much for the conference—a passionate conservationist who has been my friend since I went to his office when he was head of the Brazilian Foreign Office in Brasilia in 1989—told me last night:

"Well, we came through Rio without a scratch."

First, I should like it to be recorded that some of us are grateful to the state of Brazil and to the city of Rio de Janeiro for having staged an event which is, or could be, a watershed in human affairs. Our thanks go to the state of Brazil. I should have liked to hear this afternoon my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who went there to represent the Labour party.

Secondly, I must clarify the Government's position, following the good speech by the Secretary of State for the Environment, which I listened to extremely attentively, at the natural history museum yesterday.

Is not the main thrust of our policy that we should help developing countries to build up their own expertise? We can do that by repatriating information. As Robin Pellew put it, it is a question of getting information into the hands of the southern hemisphere so that the people there can appreciate and use it. It is a question of enabling all nations to take care of their own biological treasures, which means giving them information technology. I should like a letter from the Secretary of State to confirm that that is his priority. I want to know that I have got that single point right, and that that is the main thrust of what the Government are trying to do in the Darwin initiative.

I have several questions. First, what is the expected time scale in relation to the Darwin initiative? Secondly, what is the exact mechanism of support? Thirdly, are we talking about £5 million or £2 million for the Darwin initiative?

Yesterday, Michael McCarthy of *The Times* asked the Secretary of State about money. The Secretary of State said that it was a bit early to be specific and that the sums available would be the result of negotiations. The same question was put by Paul Brown of *The Guardian*, who picked up the Secretary of State on the fact that, as some of us had in our notes, the right hon. and learned Gentleman had said that "up to" £100 million was available. He thought that that was new money. Can we be clear about those two little words "up to"? Are we talking about £100 million of new money or not?

There was a lot of talk at Rio about £25 million extra for institutional capabilities. If such money is available, what is the time scale for the expenditure? Will it be spent in Burkina Faso, or wherever, or in the United Kingdom?

We must mobilise our genetic biotechnologies to help the developing countries to do the work for themselves. The key question is whether it is of more benefit in terms of value for money to give such funds as are available to the Darwin initiative or to the global environment facility. Christoph Imboden has said that we must be seen to make the GEF credible. I agree, but I have a hunch that the Darwin initiative could, potentially, be the best value for money of all. It is a matters of giving help and funding on a sectoral basis. How will we ensure that the Darwin initiative is properly monitored?

My fourth question relates to the experience of Christoph Imboden, who argues from his experience that we should tackle matters through local problems related to integrated land use and that, above all else, one should undertake programmes that involve the local people. I am not suggesting that that has not been done before, because in certain areas the Overseas Development Administration has an extremely good record. For example, it has done good work in the Kilum mountain forests in Cameroon and in the lowland rain forest in Thailand at Khao-Nor Chuchi.

What exactly is meant by the "network of protected areas"? The Secretary of State referred to that when he spoke at the natural history museum yesterday and he used that phrase again today. If we are to have such protected areas, they should be endorsed through the IUCN—the International Union for the Conservation of Natural Resources—and Martin Holdgate, for the very reasons given by Martin Holdgate in Kensington yesterday.

What is the timetable for the work, because we do not want any unnecessary bureaucratic waiting around? How are the Government going to list their own resources? Whoever else went to Rio, I should have thought that the Joint Nature Conservation Committee should have been represented by Dr. O'Connor. Some explanation must be given, either now or later, as to the precise mechanism for listing those resources.

Statutory provision for the protection of vulnerable habitats and protected species should be strengthened so that we set an example in the United Kingdom. Such a policy is endorsed strongly by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which wants a strategy to be developed to ensure the environmentally sensitive use of our countryside.

Fifthly, what about the educational component of the Darwin initiative? Kew already runs an MSc course and Edinburgh university and the Royal Botanic gardens are to start an MSc course on biodiversity and tropical rainforests from October. Can those institutions expect some help from the Darwin initiative? The House should remember that Kew has the best laboratory in the world for molecular systematics, the largest seed bank in the world and, as the Minster knows, many other impressive facilities.

My sixth question relates to the speech given by the Secretary of State at the natural history museum. Yesterday, he said—I do not think that I have got him wrong:

"The Convention will require us to keep our system under review, and we shall do so."

By what method will that review be carried out?

Seventhly, the Secretary of State said:

"As well as the sponsors of this event, there are university departments, research councils and learned societies. Britain's commerce is strong in animal and plant conservation and in breeding and in the development of new pharmaceuticals."

That raises the question of intellectual property rights, which are the moral property of indigenous peoples. How can we give the indigenous peoples what is theirs?

I had the honour of taking Chief Paulinho Paikan, who is now in some difficulties, to see Mr. Speaker Weatherill and played my part in hosting his visit to Britain. From that and other experiences, it is clear that there is a strong feeling that people with thousands of years of Amazonian or other forest experience in medicines should be rewarded for their expertise.

The Lord Chancellor is personally deeply interested in the question of intellectual property rights; not only does he have a distinguished scientific background and is able to understand the issues, but he is also a distinguished lawyer. This is an opportunity to ask him to apply his mind, which I am sure he would do, to the question of intellectual property rights.

My eighth question is about the interdepartmental action group. I strongly agreed with the Secretary of State when he said that Rio was part of an ongoing process and was not an event. The interdepartmental action group should ask whether the Government intend to create a United Kingdom national consultation committee on sustainability, as suggested at Rio, what plans the Government will report to the commission on the status of rare and vulnerable species and habitats and, in particular, what action will be taken to report to the commission on the status of Britain's lowland peat bogs, which are being rapidly destroyed by the horticulture industry, and heathlands, which are disappearing through development and neglect.

My ninth point follows an earlier interruption of mine. I want to know what instructions have been given to the distinguished forester Ron Kemp, who will be going to Malaysia on 12 July. I urge that he should take into account the representations made at the Oxford forestry conference and elsewhere by David Norman of D. and M. Norman, the timber merchants of Linwood, who have been the driving force for the Scottish hardware wood charter, of which David Bellamy and I are trustees.

It is unreal to expect countries not to export valuable resources from their forests and we have no right to ask it of them because they need foreign exchange. The problem is how to tackle the issue, so I want to know whether Ron Kemp will take with him the various ideas that have been developed by David Norman.

My tenth question concerns what will go on in Glasgow next week at the international whaling conference. Again, there could be a British lead, telling the Norwegians, the Icelanders and the Japanese that to talk about the need to catch whales for purposes of scientific research is hypocritical garbage, and in no circumstances should they be allowed to get away with that.

I reviewed for *The Sunday times* a book by Sonny Ramphal in which he wrote:

"We cannot save the freshness of the air or the purity of the water or the goodness of the earth, we cannot save the forests or the elephants or the whales, unless we save the people. We cannot ask endangered people to rescue the planet from the many threats it faces unless we link Earth's salvation to their own. Poverty threatens the survival of the poorest. To appeal to them to join in saving the planet is pointless unless we link it to their own survival. Simply to tell those at the margin of existence not to cut down the forest and not to have many children when they see both as necessary to their survival is to be not only insensitive to their predicament but also downright provocative. The poor need to share in the human commitment to change so that life on the planet can be sustainable for all. But to make an appeal for that commitment credible, the rest of the world must address not merely its own salvation but the relief of poverty as well. We must save the many who are poor because they are poor; it may well be the surest way of saving the few who are rich."

Rio must be ongoing, but on the understanding that we are helping the countries of the south to help themselves and seeking to repatriate the expertise, some of which originally came from them, which resides in Kew and the Royal Botanic gardens. The least that we can do is to pay it back.

9.10 pm

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): The interesting debate this evening has been much enriched by the contributions of many of my hon. Friends and Conservative Members. We have heard four maiden speeches, from the hon. Members for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan), for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) and for Worcester (Mr. Luff). They were all memorable speeches, and we look forward to hearing from those hon. Members again in the future. I hope that, when they speak on these matters, it will not be because the Whips have dragged them in after 8 o'clock, as has happened during our debate this evening.

The Rio conference, which attracted representatives from 140 countries, tens of thousands of visitors, world leaders, and a major presence by the international non-governmental organisation movement at the Global Forum, has succeeded in raising consciousness on issues of the world environment and development. The Earth summit has successfully knitted together a development and environmental agenda which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) said, is so important, that it should be replicated in the structure of Government Departments dealing with those matters in the United Kingdom.

*[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]*

It has exposed the hollow nature of concern expressed by the developed world for third world development. Countries have desperately cast around in search of spurious justifications for failing to fund the mammoth task of easing the path toward sustainable development. Two thirds of the planet has been let down.

The Rio agenda is the unavoidable agenda of the 1990s and over the millenium. We must deal with poverty, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). If we avoid redressing the imbalance between north and south, we shall spark off huge movements of population from underdeveloped to developed countries, from north to south, and we shall provoke a political backlash of immense proportions, fuelled by bigotry and racial tensions. We need look no further than developments in parts of central Europe to see the writing on the wall. The collapse of the command economies, with the consequent poverty, is exerting immeasurable strain on the internal political dynamics of a number of west European states.

A failure to deliver on Rio will inevitably lead to the development of a number of fortress power blocs, ring fencing much of central and western Europe, the United States and developing parts of south-east Asia. The most recent United Nations report states:

"Ahead lie four decades of the fastest growth in human numbers in all history."

It predicts an increase in world population from 5·5 billion to 10 billion in the next 60 years. How can the world absorb 4,500 million people in conditions of sustainable development and yet, at the same time, preserve the environment for all mankind? That is what the Rio argument is all about.

The cry of the third world to developed countries is, "Cut your over-consumption of the world's scarce resources." The response of the industrialised nations is, "Cut your population increase." Rio failed to find a meeting of minds. The unpalatable truth is that a question mark hangs over the developed world's preoccupation with growth at any price. A massive flow of funds must be organised in favour of the third world, which will cost us.

The Prime Minister has said:

"Money is the root of all progress".

Tonight I wish to concentrate my remarks on money and the shift of resources from north to south. The United Nations' target of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product has been with us for 18 years. Whereas a Labour Government, in the most hostile economic conditions, dramatically increased aid from 0·38 per cent. to 0·51 per cent. of GNP—a 30 per cent. increase in real terms in five years—the present Government cut the budget almost in half during the following 11 years. Some £11·7 billion in real terms was removed from the overseas development aid budget.

To hide their attack on the aid budget, the Government have persisted in deliberately misleading Parliament by twisting statistics, wriggling on commitments, manipulating development agendas, hiding behind spurious arguments on quality and targeting, skewing aid budgets in favour of the needs of British industry, not the needs of the world's poor, and blaming European institutions—the United Nations and anyone else they can find—when their programmes fail through cock-ups orchestrated in Whitehall.

The Government have tampered with critical evaluation reports in bungled attempts to hide from Parliament the truth of their failures. They have marginalised overseas development by turning the ODA into a Whitehall sideshow under a Minister in the House of Lords. It is a litany of obfuscation that breaches the amicable consensus based on trust that has been built up over decades between the two Front Bench teams on an extremely sensitive issue.

The Labour party is tired of the deceit. Probably the worst example of statistical twisting came on 3 June, when the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said:

"In 1978-79, the net aid programme was £727 million".—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 917.]

He said that it rose to nearly £1,800 million by 1991-92. Does the Minister remember saying that? That was a cruel abuse of statistics, which was repeated in Prime Minister's questions on 9 June. What the Minister failed to say was that he was quoting and comparing cash figures. His proposition was ludicrous; it was as daft as comparing the salary of a Member of Parliament in 1978 of less than £7,000 with a Member's salary of more than £30,000 in 1992, while ignoring inflation.

Is the Minister actually saying that hon. Members' salaries have increased four-fold during the past 13 years? If the Government want to use some bogus statistics, will the Minister confirm that, on the same measure, income tax has risen from a take of £23 billion in 1978-79 to £77 billion in 1991-92? Is he saying that income tax has more than tripled under the Tories? Curiously enough, even under that stupid measure, aid has been cut, as the cash total for 1978-79 has not increased by a factor of three.

We are seeing bottom-of-the-barrel politics. Another statistical manipulation came in an answer given by the Prime Minister to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, on 2 June, when he said:

"We have dramatically increased in real terms the amount of aid"—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 703.]

Let us compare that with the Prime Minister's revised answer, given on 15 June, when, realising his earlier error, he changed his mind:

"The aid programme has increased by 8 per cent. since 1987-88."

Even that was a distortion of the record. What the Prime Minister refused to admit was that, in the period 1979-90, real-terms allocations had been cut by 33 per cent.—and whose figures were those?

The right hon. Gentleman's wholly misleading responses were further aggravated when the Government started suggesting that Britain was the world's sixth largest donor. That is just another game with statistics. We are the sixth largest donor—we may even be the fifth largest, as the Development Assistance Committee report appears to suggest; but the reason for our rating is that, after the United States, Japan, France and Italy, we are the largest OECD economy. So nothing less is to be expected. What really matters is how our aid volumes compare with countries above and below us in terms of GNP.

France, with only a slightly larger GNP—even discounting debt forgiveness—spends two and a half times what we spend on official aid. Germany spends more than twice as much. Canada, with a GNP and population half the size of ours, spends nearly as much as we do. The Netherlands, with a population a quarter the size of ours, spends nearly as much as we do. Sweden, with a population one sixth the size of ours, spends three quarters

as much as we do. Tiny Denmark, with a GNP one seventh the size of the United Kingdom's, spends nearly half what we do. These volume comparisons expose the hollowness of the Government's aid volume arguments. They are a sham.

Comparative proportions of GNP that we spend on aid are far more relevant. They are the real index of generosity. They show that, despite growing public concern and the fact that we are the world's sixth largest GNP economy, we are the world's 15th most miserly donor. The figures are devastating.

As for the flow of funds between the third world and the United Kingdom, historically we have given more in official assistance than we have received in bank repayments—a matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). In 1990, however, the position was dramatically reversed. For the first time, the flow of money to developing countries was negative: the United Kingdom received more money in bank repayments than it gave in aid, investment or new loans. When this fact first emerged, the Government wriggled. They tried to argue that the figures did not include debt write-off. When pressed for the write-off figures, the Government claimed they were market-sensitive.

This has been a saga of Government deceit over aid, and it has continued for the past 13 years. The last refuge of the political scoundrel is to hide himself away under a smokescreen of distorted statistics and manipulated facts.

I move on to the wider Rio agenda. The Prime Minister announced there that Britain planned to spend substantial extra resources on forestry conservation, biodiversity, energy efficiency, population planning, agriculture and the 10th replenishment of the IDA fund. The Government, we are told, have earmarked £100 million for the global environment facility, not over one year but over three—about £35 million a year. Will that £100 million and the other Rio commitments be truly additional money? Will there be a revision of the three-year projections in the public expenditure White Paper? If the answer is that the forecasts are not to be revised and that additionality is to be funded out of the planned increases, then no additional money will be provided at all, and Rio promises will have been transformed into Rio rhetoric. Will the White Paper be revised to cover all the Rio promises—yes or no?

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) dealt with the environmental aspects of the Rio agenda. Throughout the debate, we have heard repeated references to the environmental crisis facing the planet. However, there have been few signs of how the Government intend to meet their targets. We know that back-room deals were done to stitch agreements on biodiversity, global climate changes and forestry—all riddled with get-out clauses.

Agenda 21 provided us with a number of initiatives, including the Sustainable Development Commission. I pay tribute to the Government for the part that they played in promoting these initiatives, some of which were positive. However, they failed to address the question how the $40 billion bill for funding Agenda 21 was to be paid. Furthermore, the extremely important issue of world trade was sidestepped and was left to be resolved in the GATT discussions, now on the verge of collapse. If Rio cannot deliver, and GATT breaks down, what happens to the £40 billion increased world trade that the under-developed countries were expecting?

The topics covered by Agenda 21 that are of particular interest to me are the chapters on deforestation and toxic waste. Rio appears to have left consideration of these matters to the Commission and nations to deal with in further multinational and bilateral discussions. The problem with adopting such an approach is that further delay means the further rape of the forest, the further plunder of environmental resources and the green light for the developed countries to exercise their economic muscle and further exploit the weaknesses of third-world countries.

Let me give the House an example. Some weeks ago, hon. Gentlemen may recall a little-reported item by Mr. Damien Lewis in the national media concerning the importation of a shipment of 1,500 cu ft of alerce, a timber from Chile's temperate rain forest. Timbmet, an Oxford company, imported the wood in contravention of appendix 1 of the convention on international trade in endangered species and in breach of the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. The timber was seized by Customs and Excise.

Timbmet is a multi-million pound company, well known in the trade. It should be prosecuted. The question is: is it reasonable for the major shareholders and directors of this company to be able to hide behind anonymity in their local communities, enjoying all the respectability of a comfortable respected and well-heeled life style, when behind this thin veneer of social acceptability is to be found dependency on a company that profits through exploiting endangered and protected species in the developing world?

All the treaties and conventions in the world are meaningless if first-world enterprise runs roughshod over the interests that we are trying to protect. The individual directors—Messrs. Boustead, Greenbury, Kemp and Kemp of Oxford—should be publicly held accountable for the irresponsible acts of Timbmet.

If Rio cannot deliver and the conventions are to be breached, the environmental movement should consider a policy of publicly identifying those who are culpable. I would call it an exercise in environmental "outing". If that was adopted by the environmental movement, it would send a shiver down the spines of all those who are so readily prepared to turn a quick buck, regardless of the cost to the environment. *[Laughter]*. Hon. Members may laugh, but Rio failed in these cases.

I have another case. ITN journalist Sue Lloyd Roberts recently reported on the actions of a company called Thor Chemicals in the South African so-called black homeland of Kwazulu. This company is a subsidiary of Thor Chemical Holdings, a company with a £27 million turnover, registered in the United Kingdom at Margate in Kent. Last year, it reported profits of £1·5 million. Its Kwazulu operation has been involved with mercury waste recycling and production. It trades with the United Kingdom and the United States, but at what cost? Its mercury processes have become so dangerous that in part they are being closed down. More than 60 of its workers have been subjected to mercury-related poisoning and related illnesses. A loss of limb control and co-ordination, slurred speech and mental illness characterise those conditions. Its huge belching incinerator has contributed to the despoiling of a whole environment, including waterways and the surrounding countryside.

The company relies on cheap labour. The casual labour that it hires has been employed on the most vulnerable of

*[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]*

processes. Local unions say that the threat of unemployment if one complains is constantly over the head of the local work force. The plant's operations are a public scandal and would never have been condoned in the United Kingdom. That is probably why they were set up in Kwazulu.

Meanwhile, the company's British principals, a Mr. Shutler of Altrincham, Mr. Sherwin and a Mr. Tracy of Broadstairs and a Mr. Wood of Gillingham, no doubt enjoy a perfectly comfortable, respectable and civilised life style, well away from the devastation that their commercial activities have inflicted on the people of Kwazulu. Surely they should be publicly identified. Why should they be allowed to hide away behind the safe sanctuary of anonymity afforded by leafy suburbia here in the United Kingdom? Such people who are prepared to exploit the grinding poverty and crumbling environment of the third world should be exposed here at home. The Secretary of State laughs. He thinks that it is funny.

**Mr. Howard** *rose*——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I shall give way in a minute.

Environmental outing means the exposure of those who are prepared to endanger the environment so often at a risk to health. Anonymity must be broken. People should be held accountable for their actions. Now I shall let the Minister intervene.

**Mr. Howard:** The hon. Gentleman is making a serious point, and it is a pity he should spoil it by indulging in such venomous contempt for what he describes as leafy surburbia. Is the hallmark of the new modern Labour party to be Contempt for leafy surburbia?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** And I am expected to reply to that intervention.

**Madam Deputy Speaker** Order. The hon. Gentleman must address me in the Chair, not his hon. Friend.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I address you, Madam Deputy Speaker, by saying—and I am expected to respond to that information. What can one say? Je ne sais quoi.

I hope that the environmental groups in the United Kingdom take on board what I am saying here tonight. The ball is now in their court. Greenpeace is leading the way. Where Rio has miserably failed, due to commercial and economic pressures, they can succeed by forging a new agenda of public accountability.

**Mr. Ottaway:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** I am sorry, but I have to make way for the Minister in two minutes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised the interesting issue of the funding of the Darwin initiative. He brought before the House a number of sums that have been alluded to by Ministers, I understand, in statements outside the House. I should like to know what budget will fund the initiatives if those moneys are to be spent in London? Will they be funded by the Overseas Development Administration or by the Department of the Environment?

Some concern is being expressed by some people in the development NGO movement that, if the product of Rio is over and above the allocations that have been alluded to by Ministers—the £100 million and the additional moneys—if it is that we shall see a slow seepage of moneys out of poverty alleviation projects into areas of environmental concern, to some extent what has come out of Rio will be disastrous for the third world.

We need assurances. If the funding of projects and the incremental costs arising from environmental amelioration is to come from the budget for a health clinic in southern India or an irrigation project in Africa, there may well be grounds for a legitimate grouse in the future. I hope that the Minister will be able to answer that important queston.

9.35 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd):** We have had a full and interesting debate on the issues raised by the Earth summit, and I am delighted to be able to reply.

On his return from Rio, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out the real achievements that we made there. I do not for a moment accept the arguments of those who say that the summit failed to go far enough in tackling the important issues that we face, and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who said that he thought that it had made progress. Many inflated expectations were expressed in the months before Rio, and it is, of course, impossible to satisfy everyone; but Rio put down a firm platform of agreements, on which we must build an effective long-term implementation process.

I believe that 22 speeches were made tonight, and I shall do my best to respond to them all, but I shall not be able to do so properly in 25 minutes. I am conscious that I am replying not only on behalf of the Foreign Office and the Department of the Environment, but on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Transport; but I shall do my best.

The cornerstone of the summit was the opening for signature of legally binding conventions on climate change and biological diversity. More than 150 countries signed both conventions. The climate change convention was negotiated over 16 months; the biological diversity convention took slightly longer—but, given the normal pace at which such negotiations proceed, that in itself was a remarkable achievement. The imminence of the Earth summit clearly helped everyone involved to focus their minds on the issues that were at stake.

I must take issue with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who is not in the Chamber now. She said that UNCED was supposed to agree a number of treaties, but managed to agree only two of them. That is not correct. Only two legally binding treaties were ever planned for Rio—the conventions on climate change and on biodiversity. It should be noted that both those complex negotiations were completed in a strikingly short time, and that each received over 150 signatures at the conference.

Before I say anything else, I must comment on the four delightful maiden speeches that we heard today. I felt a little jealous when my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) described his constituency as the number one holiday venue in the United Kingdom. My constituency, Morecambe and Lunesdale, has some visitors from Yorkshire—although, as far as I

am aware, they do not include the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), whom we tease on occasion—and it shares some of the social problems that my hon. Friend attributed to Blackpool.

My hon. Friend described his experience of journeys to the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, and the environmental catastrophe that he saw there. The environmental tranche of the United Kingdom's know-how fund is £5 million for the next three years, and we shall be helping with training, scholarships and expertise transfer. My hon. Friend observed the failure of an economic system—a system which had failed to adopt market-based systems, to allow the efficient allocation of resources and to observe good government and free trade, and that had not had the benfit of, for instance, the Uruguay round and the GATT. All those matters are deeply important for the environment and the developing world, as I think the hon. Member for Workington would agree.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) made an elegant speech. She said that everyone—from Government down to individuals in their own homes—must be involved in tackling environmental problems, with which I heartily agree. The Rio declaration makes it clear that the citizen's participation is fundamental to the process. It emphasises the need for environmental information to be available and for environmental impact assessments to meet the concerns of ordinary individuals. My hon. Friend touched on matters that are central to the Rio declaration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) spoke as an environmental scientist. He brought his expertise to the House and spoke of the beauties of the urban environment that he represents. He is most welcome to the House, and most welcome indeed to the Conservative party for an obvious reason: it is far too long since the Conservative party returned a Member of Parliament from the Indian sub-continent. He is the first Member to have originated from Sri Lanka—he is not the first Conservative Member from the Indian sub-continent, but there has not been one for perhaps 100 years—and we are most pleased to see him here today.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) spoke of one of the most beautiful environments in Britain. Sadly, he was interrupted by the 10-minute rule, but in his short survey he told us of the quality of his local brewery and of the beauty of the county that he represents.

All four of my hon. Friends spoke warmly of their predecessors and their constituencies. Their panegyrics were well phrased. I give them this word of advice: agenda 21 of the Rio declaration is only 800 pages long, and if they have little else to do in the long recess they could take it home and read it. The trouble is that it is written in rather turbid prose—it is good stuff, but it is heavy going—and if they could write a potted version for other hon. Members in the elegant way in which they spoke this afternoon, they would be doing the House a service. We look forward to hearing further speeches from them.

The climate change convention marked an important and historic first step towards solution of the global warming problem. It commits all countries to devise measures to combat climate change and to report on those measures to the conference of the parties. It commits the industrialised countries to go beyond that and to take a lead by instituting measures aimed at returning emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by the end of the century. That is a sensible precautionary step and, as the convention evolves, the conference of the parties will review the action being taken in the light of improved scientific knowledge and will assess the need for further action.

I shall answer some of the questions posed by the hon. Member for Dewsbury, who opened the debate for the Opposition. She asked a question that was touched on by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—why is the United Kingdom's $CO_2$ stabilisation target conditional on actions? That is at the heart of it. Far from that being a matter about which we are defensive, we can assert very positively why it is so. Global problems need a global response. The hon. Lady knows that a quarter of the world's gas emissions are from the United States. Unilateral action by Britain and the European Community would be insufficient without action by other major emitters. Unilateral action would seriously damage the United Kingdom's economy and our industry's competitiveness, which we are not prepared to contemplate.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor:** I am grateful to the Minister for giving way and for confirming what the Secretary of State refused to confirm earlier—that the Government's target is conditional and not the clear-cut target that the Minister was trying to suggest. Does not the Minister realise that if the whole of the European Community were to meet that target, it would be a significant contribution? The countries that are getting ahead of the game are those which are looking after their own industrial interests best. We do British industry no favours by making it inefficient, especially in energy conservation.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The hon. Lady must accept that it is a global problem on which we must all act in concert. The same principle applies to the reason why we did not subscribe to the side declaration to which she referred. The hon. Lady cited the European Community, so I shall also do so. The EC decided that it was better to work through the climate change convention, which was signed by more than 150 countries, than to take the divisive step of a separate declaration which not all those countries—and not even all the OECD countries—would be able to support. The climate convention contains a clear target which we should work to achieve.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) asked a question to which I shall respond immediately. Yes, of course we shall observe our obligations under the climate convention to return carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels. We have published our strategy on limiting $CO_2$ emissions and we are urging all developed countries to join us in publishing full national programmes by the end of 1993.

A major feature of contributions to the debate has been the question of population and population growth. In order to save time, I shall not name the many hon. Members who raised the subject, but I shall cite my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway). He is not raising the issue because it is the flavour of the month; he has been interested in it for many years and he knows that I take his contribution seriously. Other hon. Members were also serious about the issue. The issue of population has moved into sharper focus in recent months, and it is right that it should do so.

*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]*

I always remember the statistics that for anyone who is 40 years old, like yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker and some other hon. Members, the population of the world will have doubled in your lifetime. That is a significant factor. It has a little more than doubled in my lifetime, but merely doubled in the lifetime of many hon. Members.

The links between environmental degradation, poverty and population are wide-ranging and complex. We cannot ignore the fact that population growth is causing considerable environmental problems. We all have different figures, but, by the end of the next century, the population could be between double and three times what it is now. The Government raised the issue of population at Rio and took a lead, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South was kind enough to recognise.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) also mentioned population. The issue was dealt with in Rio, and I draw his attention to principle 8 of the Rio declaration which states:

"The nations undertook in principle to achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people. States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies."

In an intervention, the hon. Member for Workington once again used spurious statistics—I shall come to other spurious statistics of his in due course—and alleged that we have slashed our population budget. I have here a document entitled "Action for the Environment", an ODA publication. It states:

"Britain's support of population activities has increased substantially in recent years—from £6·5 million in 1981, to £24 million in 1990. Britain is also a major donor to multilateral population agencies, particularly the United Nations Population Fund"—

it mentions three funds—

"and these agencies will receive £9 million, £8 million and £2·75 million"

in 1992. I commend the document to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** If we take the aggregate of bilateral and multilateral allocations between 1979—*[Interruption]* That is what we spend on population, as hon. Members do not appear to understand these matters. If we take the figures together, did the budget go up or down in real terms between 1979 and 1992? Let us have the truth.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I will not be cross-examined at the Dispatch Box on some numerical calculation which the hon. Gentleman has taken all afternoon—perhaps all week—to make up.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours** *rose*——

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I am sorry, but I have rather more important things to do—to do justice to the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends' speeches, for example. He should recognise that.

The hon. Member for——

**Mr. Worthington** *rose*——

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I cannot give way any more. I have 10 minutes, and 22 contributions to deal with. I must do justice to the debate. All hon. Members can make their points.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) made an important point. He is not here now—he told me that he would not be—but I want to answer his question, which was how developing countries are to address development and environmental concerns, especially those involving energy and the impact of increased energy production on the global environment. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the global environment facility, to which Britain is a major donor, is designed to help developing countries deal with just such issues.

I shall cite one example of a project which has recently been approved and which addresses that problem. Indeed, the Szechuan gas transmission distribution rehabilitation scheme is taking place in one of the countries which the hon. Member for Pontypridd mentioned—China. Fifty per cent. of China's natural gas is produced in the province of Szechuan, and the cost to the GEF of rehabilitating the existing equipment there is £10 million. The project will have a significant demonstration value for other developing countries, and will show how investment can be made to bring antiquated gas distribution systems up to the standards of industrialised countries in terms of leakage and safety. That is a fine example of the GEF at work.

I am afraid that I shall not comment on the many points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). They will be answered in the usual way.

**Mr. Dalyell** *rose*——

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** May I comment on the hon. Gentleman's last point? If there were fewer interruptions I should make more progress. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the £100 million. The size of our contribution to the GEF is new and additional money—it is not just new; it is new and additional.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is it additional to the White Paper?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I cannot comment on the hon. Gentleman's allegations about revisions of the White Paper. If he is not prepared to accept the words, "it is new and additional money", and make what use of them he wishes; if, when the money comes, there is some way of demonstrating that it is not new and additional money, the hon. Member for Linlithgow will not have been as capable an advocate as he likes to make out.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is it £5 million or £2 million.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I am sorry—I shall have to comment on that in correspondence.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Answer the question.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I cannot answer that question; I do not believe that a decision has been made.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Repeated interventions make it impossible for me to follow the argument. Perhaps hon. Members could be a little quieter so that we may hear what the Minister has to say.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I must make progress, especially as I am about to deal with an area of interest to Opposition Members.

As Opposition Members know, we accept the target of 0·7 per cent., and are committed to reaching it as soon as possible. In recent years the United Kingdom aid

programme has increased in line with our economic growth—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—and, at £1,831 million, it has grown by 8 per cent. in real terms since 1987. The quality of our aid programme is of the highest standard and order, and is recognised internationally for effectiveness. As hon. Members know, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD recently commended Britain on that, and recognised that British aid goes to those most in need.

I shall ask the hon. Member for Workington—and the hon. Members for Dewsbury and for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd)—one or two questions.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Ask me.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** All right. I shall put the questions before the House.

Two years ago, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was questioned about the Labour party's commitment——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Not true.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** If it is not true, the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to point that out on an intervention—when I shall willingly give way. But first let me repeat the words in question, as not all hon. Members may be as conscious of them as the hon. Gentleman and I are.

The hon. Member for Derby, South was asked in May 1990 in the BBC "On the Record" programme whether the 0·7 per cent. of GNP was a specific commitment by the Labour party. She said:

"No, that is a goal."

She did not say that it was a target. Hon. Members will remember that there was some ridicule about the target to which the United States and all the rest of us have signed up in the climate change convention.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I will give way on condition that the hon. Gentleman explains to the House the difference between a goal and a target for the Labour party.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The answer is easy to give. We live by our record. We nearly achieved the figure between 1974 and 1979. We were determined to achieve it under the next Labour Government, but we were robbed of the opportunity.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I have not quite finished. There are a few more things that I had better read out. The hon. Member for Derby, South said:

"That is what we are aiming for. Nobody"——

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Get on with it.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I will. The hon. Lady said:

"Nobody is absolutely able to put their hands on their heart and say 'We know we can get there'. Not even if there is a Labour Government."

We know how to read these things and we all know what they mean. Perhaps Opposition Members, when accusing us of hypocrisy and letting the side down, should dwell on those words which explained the true position.

I will reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Arundel (Sir M. Marshall), who is president of the Inter-Parliamentary Council. He referred to the Sustainable Development Commission. I wholeheartedly agree with him that an effective follow-up to UNCED is essential. Like my hon. Friend, I support the formation of the Sustainable Development Commission. The commission's success will depend on the political commitment of the states involved. We hope that all will participate at a high level, as we certainly will.

I will speak briefly about the importance of trade as well as aid. Many of my hon. Friends have referred to trade as well as aid being essential for developing countries to progress in an environmentally responsible way. I strongly agree with that comment. Aid makes up only a small amount of the income of developing countries. In 1989, aid was 8 per cent. of Africa's income and the figure was 1·7 per cent. for south Asia. The trading position in developing countries is improving. The 1989 GATT figures show that there are now six developing countries among the top 20 trade exporters in the world. That is a remarkable achievement and shows that in environmental matters we must not rely on the Labour party's rhetoric about the need for aid. We must examine the enormous importance of developing trade for the developing world to enable it to increase its prosperity.

I emphasise several points. The criticism of the results of Rio has been severely overdone. The fact is that Rio was the largest-ever meeting of Heads of Government. It achieved a number of agreements which mark important steps forward for the protection of the global environment. Two of the agreements, the convention on climate change and the convention on biodiversity, already have the signatures of more than 80 per cent. of the countries of the world. That is deeply significant.

The conference has also agreed a comprehensive action plan and a credible follow-up mechanism to turn words into actions. It concluded ground-breaking principles on sustainable development in the form of the Rio declaration and there was also a declaration on forests. They provide guidelines against which to evaluate future plans.

By any standards, the conference was a highly significant event which has given new political momentum and public prominence to sustainable development for the future. Those are facts which the critics cannot gainsay and which heavily outweigh the few matters on which the conference did not produce as much as some had hoped.

My second point is to re-emphasise that in the context of Rio too much attention has been devoted to the argument about aid. Certainly, contributions to economic growth by means of aid have an enormous role to play in the third world. However, the real foundations for environmentally sensitive development lie elsewhere. They lie, first, in an open world trading system which encourages developing countries to produce goods that they can export and, secondly, in the adoption of market-based economic systems, which will encourage inward investment, economic dynamism and efficient allocation of resources.

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That at the sitting on Tuesday 30th June, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall—

(1) put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr.

Secretary Lilley relating to Family Law not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon; and

(2) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Lilley relating to Social Security not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon;

and the aforesaid Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

## Plymouth Dockyard

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10 pm

**Mr. Gary Streeter** (Plymouth, Sutton): Later this year, our Government will decide which of the naval dockyards —Rosyth in Scotland or Devonport in England—will carry out refitting and refuelling work on the Trident submarine. I have two reasons for requesting this Adjournment debate. First, I wish to explain how important Devonport dockyard is to the economy of Plymouth and the surrounding regions and what will be the consequences if Devonport Management Ltd. is not awarded either all or the substantial part of the nuclear refit work. Secondly, I wish to speak in favour of the DML bid, which I believe is the right choice for the Ministry of Defence in terms of value for money and other strategic considerations.

As the matter is so important to Plymouth, I have agreed that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), who is equally interested in the matter, should also take part in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) has requested that he should be associated with my remarks. He is well known, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you are, as a champion of many years standing of Devonport dockyard.

I turn first to the importance to Devon and Cornwall of DML winning the nuclear refit work. It must be understood that, for many years, Plymouth has been dependent on the dockyard for a significant proportion of its male employment. That is less so than it used to be, but the dockyard still employs 5,500 people from the Plymouth travel-to-work area. It is by far the largest private employer in the region.

Since 1985, when private management of the yard was introduced, it has reduced its work force from 13,500 to 5,500—a 60 per cent. reduction of mainly male jobs. How many other towns or cities in Britain have suffered a similar fate? It is partly for that reason that, as at April 1992, Plymouth had an unemployment rate of 14·2 per cent.—well above the national average.

Even though our dependency on the dockyard is less strong today than it has been for many years, its viability is of massive significance to the economy of Plymouth and the south-west. Many hon. Members believe that Plymouth is an attractive and prosperous city. It is attractive, but Plymouth has many needs, and the need for jobs is one of them.

The significance of the dockyard is increased by the collocation of the naval base as part of the Devonport complex. The continued existence of both Devonport and the naval base is of massive importance to the defence of this nation. It is certainly of substantial importance to our local economy.

It may help my hon. Friend the Minister in replying if I set out some relevant information. The Devonport complex and other military bases in Plymouth generate £521 million of income per annum for Devon and Cornwall. That is a massive sum. The defence complex, directly or indirectly, supports 29,900 jobs, of which almost 7,000 are generated by the expenditure of wages of defence workers and by purchases from local firms. More than 600 local firms receive orders from the dockyard, and

some £38 million is spent directly on contracts with those firms. Approximately 30 per cent. of all local income in the Plymouth area is generated directly or indirectly by the dockyard and naval base, and other military installations. About 20 per cent. of the local work force have jobs which are directly or indirectly associated with the Devonport complex. Those figures clearly show that the continued existence of the dockyard and naval base are critical to the economy of Devon and Cornwall.

Let us consider for a moment the economic consequences for the region if the refit work is not forthcoming. There is every possibility that the dockyard would gradually die without that work. Certainly, many people connected to the yard firmly believe that the yard would close without the nuclear refit work. That would devastate the economy of Plymouth and simply cannot be allowed to happen.

There are those who believe that, if the dockyard were to close, the Navy would gradually leave Plymouth. That is what I call the domino theory. It would mean a further loss of jobs and would be a further body blow to our region from which we would find it hard to recover. I should be glad if my hon. Friend the Minister of State could say something about the second prospect—the commitment of the Navy to Plymouth in the long term—by way of reassurance to my constituents.

May I take this opportunity to kill off, once and for all, the feeling in some quarters that Plymouth is in some way anti-nuclear? It is not. The council, the community, the work force and the trade unions are all committed to carrying out the nuclear refit work in Plymouth. Of course, we are concerned about safety—only a fool would not be—but we are impressed and satisfied by the stringent safety standards introduced by the Ministry of Defence. Please, let the House be in no doubt that we want this work.

I should not like the House to think that we are asking for handouts that we do not deserve. Plymouth has coped remarkably well with the reduction of jobs in the dockyard since 1985. We have sought to diversify our local economy. There have been massive changes within the management of the dockyard to improve greatly value for money on behalf of taxpayers. Since DML took over the dockyard, there have been substantial commercial successes and many financial savings. About £100 million worth of commercial work has been brought in by DML, constituting about 20 per cent. of its work load. A recent National Audit Office report has made it clear that more than £110 million has been saved by DML in the past four years. Those savings increase year by year.

Recently, an independent study was made into the case for awarding the nuclear refit work to Devonport, and into the ongoing maintenance of the naval base and royal dockyard there. That study concluded that the collocation of the naval base and dockyard facilities provides economies on a scale at least equivalent to any potential net savings provided by closure. That study clearly showed that Devonport is geographically best placed in the United Kingdom for access to deep water and rapid response. It showed that closure of the Devonport complex would throw away recent investment, much of which would have to be re-created elsewhere. Most importantly, the study showed that Devonport could refit the nuclear-powered submarines, including Trident, much more cheaply than any other alternative.

The DML proposals provide for low-cost modernisation of existing facilities, strengthen nuclear safety and will allow all the planned submarine load to be accommodated at a single site, thus reducing fixed costs to the taxpayer. Given the Treasury's determination to curb public expenditure—a view that I wholeheartedly endorse and applaud—that is surely an advantage.

For all those reasons, the DML bid is supreme. Will the Minister also consider carefully whether now is a wise time to place all our nuclear submarine support facilities in Scotland, with the growing demand for independence or devolution in that country, which has no doubt received a recent boost by the strides towards nationhood of many of the central European peoples?

This issue will come to a head in the next few weeks. It is the subject of intense lobbying. The needs of our national defence, the prospects for employment and the future of communities are at stake. Inevitably passions have been heightened on this subject. In those circumstances, we all have a particular duty to ensure that emotion does not cloud reason and logic. No one has a birthright to the amount of work that any decision on the refitting contracts might provide. The decision as to who undertakes that work must be made on the basis of an open and fair competitive contest.

Devonport dockyard and the local community are confident that a decision taken on those grounds will give them victory, because DML can provide quality services at a reasonable cost with the flexibility that is required.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to mention the fact that he has been invited by me to come to Plymouth to visit DML, to speak with council leaders and to see for himself—I have no doubt that he will be impressed by it—our commitment to win the work and to do it well.

The decision is critical for Plymouth. I am fully persuaded that the DML bid is right for the MOD, the taxpayer and my constituents. I commend the Devonport case to my hon. Friend.

10.10 pm

**Mr. David Jamieson** (Plymouth, Devonport): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) for allowing me to participate in his Adjournment debate. I am particularly pleased to note that you are in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, because that means that the three Members for Plymouth, who have a particular interest in this matter, are here tonight. However, I am absolutely certain that you will show your customary impeccable impartiality on this matter as on others.

I am pleased to note that this issue is a matter of two-party accord. We are agreed on a matter of vital importance to Devonport, and we are speaking with one voice.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Jamieson:** I shall not give way on this occasion.

The dockyard is the largest naval support facility in western Europe. It is home to the royal dockyard, the naval base, the barracks and all the support services. I hesitate to refer to history in your presence, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I am well aware of your considerable knowledge, but work started on constructing the dockyard more than 300 years ago in, 1691, under the orders of King

*[Mr. Jamieson]*

William. He appreciated that Plymouth, with its deep-water port and as the entrance to the western approaches, was vital to the protection of the country.

This century, the need for the dockyard has been called into question on occasion. Each time, however, a crisis has arisen and the dockyard has proved its worth, especially during the two world wars. At the time of the Falklands war, had it not been for the work force working 24 hours a day for weeks on end, the task force would never have set sail. The dockyard also played a vital role in the Gulf war.

The dockyard still has a vital defence role. As the hon. Member for Sutton said, many jobs depend upon it, as does much of the local economy. Plymouth polytechnic has estimated that as many as 29,000 jobs in Plymouth and its travel-to-work area depend upon work in the dockyard.

I came to Plymouth in 1981 to become deputy head teacher of a medium-sized secondary school. Then, nearly one quarter of all the 16-year-olds applied to Devonport dockyard for traineeships in every imaginable skill, ranging from coppersmithing and bricklaying to commercial work and welding. Those skills did not simply remain in the dockyard but spilt out into Cornwall, Devon and the whole area, providing the expertise needed for much of private industry. Indeed, in every other house in every street in Devonport are people who learned their skills in Devonport dockyard.

I am sad to report that the number of youngsters taking such traineeships and the number of training places available have seriously declined. Because of the unusual geographical position of Plymouth, being a long way from other major cities, there are few alternative means of employment to youngsters.

The Goschen yard training school provided excellent training for many years in the city of Plymouth. I am sad to report that, when I visited the place recently, hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of equipment lay idle. It is little used now. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will look urgently at the possibility of leasing it to local education establishments, so that the facilities may be used again, in conjunction with DML, for training people locally.

The hon. Member for Sutton referred to unemployment, which in our constituencies, including yours, Madam Deputy Speaker, is very serious indeed in some places. Unemployment among males aged 20 to 35 is particularly high. In some parts of the city, 40 per cent. of males are unemployed. Apart from that being a serious state of affairs, we have seen from other parts of the country that eventually, if such high unemployment persists, social order can break down.

I confirm what the hon. Member for Sutton said about the city fully welcoming the contract for refitting nuclear submarines. We want the dockyard to continue giving the service, now and in years to come. The dockyard has adjusted over 300 years—from the sailing ships of King William in 1691—and can, and will, adjust to the technological changes that are required for the refitting of nuclear submarines, enabling it to continue to meet the needs of the Navy in the year 2000 and beyond.

As the hon. Member for Sutton said, the economic value of the dockyard was amply proved in the Audit Commission's recent report. The whole city will welcome the work, as will Cornwall, Devon and other areas of the region. It was felt a few years ago that we were less than enthusiastic in such matters, and there was some controversy about a nuclear dump at Weston Mill, which is near the dockyard. It was a controversial matter because the proposed site was on an old creek with unstable land. It was to have been very large and, in emotive terms, was a few hundred yards from a primary school and near houses.

Everybody now accepts that the case was poorly presented at the time. The plan has been withdrawn. The new plan put forward by DML and the Ministry of Defence to extend the storage of nuclear waste in the dockyard has now achieved widespread accord in the city. The consultation process, and the greater openness that has come with the Minister taking office, have been welcomed by the public, resulting in that much wider accord for the submission that has been made to the city council. I can confirm that the whole city is together in the matter. The city council, trade unions, the chamber of trade and commerce, the whole of the work force and hon. Members on a cross-party basis are in favour of the work moving to Devonport. I hope that the Minister will take up the invitation to visit Devonport dockyard and will visit the city council and talk to local people to confirm for himself that what I say is the case.

It is our earnest hope that the nuclear refitting work comes to Plymouth. We have the facilities, the skills, a committed work force and a site that is strategically well placed to do the work. The reasons why King William built the dockyard 300 years ago, for the strategic defence of the country, still prevail today.

10.19 pm

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** First, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) for his initiative in securing this Adjournment debate. It has been a pleasure to listen to it, because we have heard two excellent speeches, and it was refreshing to hear two-party co-operation in putting the case for constituents' interests. I found the advocacy of my hon. Friend and of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) persuasive on many points, although I must remain scrupulously discreet in many ways. I fully acknowledge the great importance of the dockyard to local employment, the local economy and the wider region of Devon and Cornwall, and I thank both hon. Members for putting their case so well.

I also welcome the fact that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have been able, in the course of your august duties, to be present in the Chair tonight. Although I realise that you must remain impartial and silent, you have built up a formidable reputation over the years for your assiduity in your constituents' interests, and I know that you will listen to our proceedings with special attention.

This all-Plymouth event reflects the fact that this is a moment of great importance for the future of the dockyard and Plymouth. All hon. Members present will be aware that many of their constituents have given long and loyal service to the Crown at a facility that is not only one of the oldest but one of the largest naval dockyards in the world. It is good to be reminded that it stretches back to the days of the sailing ships of King William. Much more recently, however, Devonport's contribution to the defence of these

islands has been incontestable. The Government have no intention of overlooking that when considering the future of the naval presence in the south-west.

**Mr. Tyler:** Can the Minister be persuaded—less by the eloquence of hon. Members who represent Plymouth than by hard economic facts that all of us from that area can present to him—that the case for the Devonport dockyard is a case not just for Plymouth but for the wider region, which supplies one of the best work forces for any industrial complex in the British isles? It demonstrates only too well that this issue is not just emotive but economic.

**Mr. Aitken:** I entirely accept that it is an economic issue. It has not been presented in purely emotive terms, but has been well presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and by the hon. Member for Devonport.

I shall make it clear at the outset that, when dealing with those arguments, I have some difficulty in responding in detail, because no proposals have yet come forward to Ministers on the vital question whether to concentrate all nuclear refitting work at a single location or in two locations, or on future arrangements for either dockyard. I hope that my hon. Friend and others will understand that, as those vital issues are now under consideration, any Minister is effectively in purdah and cannot say too much in response to the good points that have been raised.

However, as I understand the forcefulness of the case, may I respond to the gracious invitations that have been issued by my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Devonport? Yes, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I intend to visit Devonport shortly, and I hope that a date can be arranged within the next four weeks. In case there are protests from Scottish Members who may be listening, I should add that I also intend to visit Rosyth shortly. But I look forward to visiting the excellent facilities that have been described tonight.

I think that it will be helpful if I set out the strategic and military context of the issues that we are discussing this evening. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), the former Secretary of State for Defence, made clear on 25 July 1990—and again, with specific reference to fleet support, on 17 July 1991—there has been a fundamental shift in the level of readiness, infrastructure and support that is now necessary to defend these islands and our interests overseas, and to fulfil our commitments to our allies.

Against that background, the Government would be shirking their responsibility to the taxpayer and the common interest if they failed to consider whether or not their overall investment in defence, and fleet support in particular, continued to provide value for money. I was glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton placed emphasis in his speech, not only on value for money but on the need to contain public expenditure, which is a crucial Government responsibility. That is one of the reasons why we have instigated a thorough-going assessment of our current arrangements for fleet support.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton referred to the efforts made by Devonport Management Ltd., not only to improve value for money and refitting performance, but to diversify into other sectors in order to reduce overheads. I am happy to join him in applauding the progress made by DML over the past five years. Its performance—and, in fairness, that of its counterparts at Rosyth, Babcock Thorn—more than justified the Government's decision to introduce commercial management and a greater element of competition to the royal dockyards in 1987.

The benefits of commercialisation are clear, and were recognised by the National Audit Office in its recent report. Both dockyard management companies, having knowlingly taken on what was never going to be an easy ride, have made impressive progress towards greater efficiency and economy.

The hon. Member for Devonport fairly reminded us of the importance of the Falklands war and the fine performance of the Devonport dockyard in it. Before commercial management was introduced, it was feared that the sort of response from dockyard management and work force experienced at times of war and national crisis would not be as forthcoming from commercial managements. I am glad to lay that ghost to rest and agree with the comments of the hon. Member. The response and commitment received from both dockyards during the Falklands war and the Gulf crisis was extremely heartening, and I could give a number of fine examples.

In Devonport, DML converted the aviation training ship RFA Argus to its Gulf role as a primary casualty reception ship in just 20 days. DML also converted HMS Hecla, so that it could take over the MCM command ship role from HMS Herald in the Gulf in 1991. Those difficult tasks were undertaken most satisfactorily, and I applaud DML's performance.

I shall deal briefly with the domino theory that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton. He believed that, if the nuclear refitting role were lost, that would lead to the closure of the dockyard and the naval base. I think that was an over-pessimistic prognosis. In advance of decisions being taken on the future allocation of nuclear refitting, I can say only that our refitting programme for surface vessels and diesel-powered submarines will be substantial. I cannot give any undertakings today on the allocation of that work, but my aim is for a greater proportion of the total refitting programme to be subject to competition among ship repairers and ship builders. In those circumstances, the dockyard's future would depend on its competitiveness.

As for the naval base, my hon. Friend will know that we are moving the Upholder class submarines to Devonport, and we expect a defence presence—as exemplified by the Royal Marines at Lympstone—to remain in and around Plymouth.

Time is running short, and I must draw my remarks to a close, as more than the usual amount of time was, quite rightly, taken up by the fact that two hon. Members, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and the hon. Member for Devonport, made such eloquent contributions.

In our defence programme for the 1990s, we have promised smaller but better defence forces. It is only by ensuring that we subject all sectors of cost to rigorous scrutiny that we can make available the resources required to deliver improvements in our fighting capability. Improvements in efficiency in the dockyards have already contributed to that process, and we have recognised that the refitting facilities that will be required for our Trident submarines by the end of the decade will be crucial in that process. More investment, whether public, private or both, will be required in the coming years, but it is too early for me to give a commitment on where that investment will be.

*[Mr. Aitken]*

When we visit Devonport and Rosyth, the aim of my right hon. and learned Friend and myself will be to ensure that we are thoroughly familiar with the facilities at both dockyards. That will be essential background information for our consideration of the recommendations that may affect their long-term future. Once we have those recommendations, we shall be in a position to discuss their wider ramifications in detail with hon. Members, the appropriate local authorities and other interested parties. Tonight's debate has been helpful in starting that process.

We will take into account a wide range of factors in seeking to balance the needs of the Navy against the needs of south-west England and eastern Scotland, and against the more general needs of the defence of the United Kingdom and the cost effective use of public funds. Those difficult decisions lie ahead. Tonight's debate has been a helpful and educational process.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 26 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

## Dietary Supplements

9.34 am

**Mr. Peter Hain** (Neath): I wish to present a humble petition on behalf of 25,000 citizens of the United Kingdom, including Linda Lazarides of the Society for the Promotion of Nutritional Therapy, which recognises that whereas there are at present available in Britain a full range of vitamins, minerals and other dietary supplements which are important to correct symptoms of nutritional deficiency that cannot be corrected by good food alone, there are now restrictive proposals from the European Community to prevent that free availability.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House takes due note of this and that you exercise your parliamentary powers as necessary to defeat any attempts by any agencies whatsoever to reduce the public availability of dietary supplements or to impair in any manner whatsoever the public's present right to buy all currently available dietary supplements in all currently available formulations and dosages.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Action for the Countryside

9.35 am

**Mr. Barry Field** (Isle of Wight): I beg to move,

That this House congratulates the Government on bringing forward its Action for the Countryside package of measures to provide for a thriving, living countryside; especially welcomes the extension of Countryside Stewardship to include historic landscapes and meadow and pasture, the new Parish Paths initiative to encourage local action to assist in bringing the rights of way network into good order by the year 2000, the Rural Action scheme to take action on a wide range of local environmental issues and the Hedgerow Incentive scheme to promote improved management of hedgerows; and believes that, together with measures to stimulate the rural economy, and give greater protection to the landscape and wildlife, these initiatives demonstrate the importance the Government attaches to integrating development to sustain rural communities with the conservation of the countryside.

I have had the privilege of winning the ballot for the first time since becoming a Member of the House. Also this week, I have been awarded the great honour and extraordinary privilege of being asked to chair the Opposed Private Bill Committee on the Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Bill. And in the same week my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government has announced that the Isle of Wight is to be the very first local authority area in the country to be considered by the Local Government Commission.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): You are winning.

**Mr. Field:** Precisely. It can truly be said, not only for the constituents of the Isle of Wight but for their Member, that the time has come.

The choice of subject for this debate for me, with a name such as mine, was obvious. But like all hon. Members, I faced a dilemma. I also had to decide whether to honour a constituency engagement, an invitation from Chale parish council to attend, and speak at, the unveiling ceremony of the refurbished Hoy monument which was erected by Michael Hoy to commemorate the visit of Tsar Alexander I to this country in 1814. Hoy made his fortune trading with St. Petersburg, now thankfully renamed from its previous name of Leningrad. He was a merchant from London who not only erected the 72 ft high monument on St. Catherine's down but who owned the nearby country house known as the Hermitage.

Among the assembled dignitaries at today's ceremony will be His Excellency the Russian ambassador, Mr. Boris Pankin, and I hope that he and the Chale parish councillors, who have worked hard with the National Trust to restore the monument, will forgive me for the dilemma that I faced, which was whether to address His Excellency the Russian ambassador, whose fellow countrymen have realised that socialism has none of the answers and that only free enterprise and capitalism can truly create freedom, choice and prosperity in the countryside, or come to the House today and address the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), an unreconstructed socialist of such principle that even now he has no intention of ameliorating his views or becoming an apologist for the outdated ideologies of state and trade union corporatism.

I wrestled with my conscience: would it be His Excellency Boris Pankin or the last of the commissars from

*[Mr. Field]*

Bolsover? I mean no discourtesy to the Russian people or their ambassador when I say that the genuine article, the hon. Member for Bolsover, won the day.

**Mr. Skinner:** If the hon. Gentleman will finish his speech and let me get onto the second motion on the Order Paper—"Classless Society"—I will talk about the hypocrisy of the Tory Government and how they have ruined the lives of millions of people by chucking them on the dole queue, about people living in cardboard boxes while the Queen pays no taxes, and about the Prime Minister drawing up citizens charters while three farmers in my constituency have been put out of work because of dioxin, and some go trotting off to Rio. If we can talk about those subjects—the need to build houses, how to end waiting lists in hospitals and stop queue-jumping with tax relief money, how to deal with the spivs in the City and all the rest of it—we shall have one great debate.

**Mr. Field:** Had the hon. Gentleman contained himself for a moment longer, he would have heard me paying a small tribute to him. His presence here today evokes a poignant memory for me.

The last time I attended a debate on a Friday, it was to listen to Ian Gow. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) has chosen this debate to make his maiden speech—pleased because the people of the Isle of Wight share a common cause with the people of Eastbourne. We too were savagely deprived of a much-loved public figure when the IRA murdered our island governor, Lord Louis Mountbatten. It will not escape our attention today that it was this very week that the security services could reveal that Colonel Gaddafi had supplied and trained the very terrorists who assassinated Lord Louis.

It was the Liberal Democrats who mounted such a vociferous protest about the use of American bases in the United Kingdom to bomb Libya. My hon. Friends will realise that it is a special pleasure, particularly as, later on that Friday, Ian Gow spoke at a dinner on the Isle of Wight, to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne how pleased we are that what the bastards and their bombing undid, the ballot box and the burghers of Eastbourne put right in their inestimable wisdom. We look forward to his maiden speech.

You have been most generous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have strayed from the motion before us. The Hoy monument stands at the end of one of my favourite walks on the island. From the Pepperpot, which was erected as a penance by Walter Goderton, Lord of the Manor for Chale, for having had a hand in disposing of a shipload of His Holiness the Pope's port—one has a job saying that after the second bottle—which was shipwrecked in Chale bay in 1314, lies one of the most breathtaking views in the kingdom. Here, truly, it is possible to get the impression, in the words of the song, that one is "looking down on creation". The whole of the Isle of Wight is laid out below from the Needles to the Nab tower. That brings me to the island's motto, which is simply, "All this beauty is of God."

Forty per cent. of the Isle of Wight is designated an area of outstanding beauty. Our structure plan tells us that 70 per cent. is used for agriculture. Twenty-seven miles of our coastline are designated heritage coast. We have sites of special scientific interest, including nature reserves, cliffs and the Brading marsh. Other areas are designated as of great landscape value. The Isle of Wight county council and South Wight borough council jointly support the Countryside Recreational Management Commission. That means that expert advice is given on land conservation, such as at Brading down, Bembridge and Culver downs.

I am pleased to note that the newly privatised electricity company is already honouring its commitment to the environment by placing the present overhead cables underground on the top of the down, thereby removing a nasty eyesore that has plagued the skyline for so long. The commission provides advice and help to parish and town councils on managing land in their ownership, such as Afton marsh, and it has built up a good relationship with the National Trust, which owns such a substantial area of the island.

Footpaths and bridleways on the island are probably better signposted than in most areas, and definitely feature as a principal tourist incentive. More recently, routes have been identified as suitable for mountain bikes, and maps have been published, with sponsorship from the retailers of those bicycles.

Schemes already in place include sponsorship for the routine maintenance of lengths of footpath from interested groups and individuals, such as my old school, Bembridge school, which looks after the lengths of coastal path adjacent to the school and those passing through its grounds. Help is already given for the upkeep of footpaths by parishes.

Although the Isle of Wight county council will not participate in the parish paths scheme in its first year, there is already co-operation with some of the parishes with the greatest number of rights of way in their areas. A problem is that the ones with the lowest population, and thus the smallest precepts, cannot always contribute so much, but the larger, older parishes have always accepted some responsibility.

Other work is carried out by conservation volunteers. It includes expertise in fence laying and stone wall rebuilding as well as hedgerow planting. The Isle of Wight has a wealth of heritage and includes the remains of two Roman villas at Brading and Newport. English Heritage is responsible for buildings such as Carisbrooke castle, Appledercombe house and Osborne house. The National Trust is in Mottistone manor, the Needles battery, Newtown town hall—one of the rotten boroughs—plus the surrounding area, and Bembridge windmill.

In the 1970s, the Isle of Wight suffered its first major loss of mature trees through Dutch elm disease. That was followed, shortly after my election, by the hurricane of October 1987. I remember so well receiving a letter from a constituent, the contents of which will ring a bell with many hon. Members. It commenced, "Dear Mr. Field, What are you going to do about the disgusting state of Shanklin pier?" Two nights later, the hurricane came and the pier went. My reputation as a man of action has never looked back. In January 1990, there were subsequent storms. Although there have been on-going replanting programmes, it will be many years before the damaged trees are fully replaced and the native species return, particularly our much-loved English oaks.

Also lost was an unusual species for Great Britain, mimosa trees. They grew locally in streets and private gardens, and flowered delightfully in early spring. Indeed,

we lost the one in our front garden. The Isle of Wight is rich in rare species of butterfly and moth. One of my great campaigns has been for the Glanville fritillary, named after Lady Glanville, whose will was disputed by her relatives on the basis that anybody who chased butterflies was clearly not sane enough to have made a will. It is found only on the Isle of Wight.

That is a textbook campaign which shows my new hon. Friends how to ensure that the Department of the Environment sees the error of its ways. That butterfly was missing from the protected species list—a remarkable omission when one considers that the Glanville fritillary is found only on the Isle of Wight.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): Is my hon. Friend aware that, for every 100 butterflies found 50 years ago, there is probably only one today? That is a damning indictment of the agricultural and environmental policies of successive Governments over that half-century.

**Mr. Field:** I was at one time on the point of damning the Department of the Environment and English Nature, the successor of the Nature Conservancy Council, for not including the Glanville fritillary on the protected species list. I fought a hard battle, not only against the Department, but against one or two local natural history societies. I tabled a number of questions and entered into correspondence about the Government's policy on licensing the removal of butterflies from their natural habitat. The replies that I received were unsatisfactory, but I managed to persuade ministerial colleagues that the Glanville fritillary should be protected.

On the Isle of Wight the countryside management service has recently commenced an initiative to restore the ancient chalk downlands to their natural state. That will inevitably have a marked effect on the butterfly population which, as my hon. Friend rightly said, is such an important part of the English countryside.

The National Rivers Authority recently recognised the need for the preservation and conservation of wetland regions. When the new sluice gates are constructed between the River Yar and Bembridge harbour, they will ensure that the wetlands, which are the breeding grounds of many rare species of wading birds, will be better protected. I pay tribute to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for the helpful way in which it has assisted both the National Rivers Authority and Isle of Wight county council in the design of the sluices and in the protection of the birds' habitat. I have learnt from the National Rivers Authority that soon—it is even now advertising the post—it will appoint to the island a flood defence superintendent who will live on the island and manage such issues.

Although there are complaints about the lack of verge cutting, conservation has been taken into account in recent years. Many wild flowers are now re-emerging and returning to natural sites.

I know that the motion pertains to the countryside of the United Kingdom, but I hope that I may be allowed to mention the Ventnor botanic gardens and the temperate house, which were opened in 1987. The curator is an interesting man who trained at Kew, where he met his wife. He recently made a point to me that I am sure will ring a bell with my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, who is fresh from Rio.

The curator said that the politics of botany transcends international politics. He once found himself being taken to one of the islands that was in dispute between Russia and China some years ago when it was a closed military zone. According to the Chinese authorities, it was in order for him to be there as he was in search of a rare plant. Generally, although much divides the House, our knowledge and care of the environment, endangered species, and the future of our globe and countryside brings us together.

I wish to highlight a number of successes as well as pressures relating to the countryside. I can do no better than commence with a quotation from a speech made by Lord Shuttleworth, the chairman of the Rural Development Commission, which was referred to in a recent speech of the president of the Country Landowners Association. He said:

"one prospect that I cannot accept is the abandonment of a long-standing tradition of a countryside that works in every sense. To settle for a passive countryside, used only like a carpet on the floor, or a painting on the wall, would be to fail to realise the potential of a national resource. Rural England requires a broadly based economic and social vitality of its own".

I doubt whether any hon. Member present today could put the argument more succinctly.

The entire island is a rural development area, and has been since 1984. I cannot speak highly enough of the Rural Development Commission. When I addressed its conference on the island at the Savoy country club some years ago, I said that never had so few done so much for the countryside with so little. If our civil service were as stuffed full of as much common sense and "can do" mentality as the Rural Development Commission and its island chairman, David Guy, and Robin Cook and his staff, Members of Parliament would want for nothing.

The commission has been of great assistance to me in finding some seedcorn money for the establishment of a survey on a vegetable co-operative in co-operation with the National Farmers Union. The Isle of Wight has a successful salad group, a good potato group and its grain group probably had one of the shortest journeys into intervention in the country as a result of its foresight in establishing a grain intervention store on the island. I am sad that we have not yet succeeded in establishing a vegetable co-operative on the island to enable our excellent produce to be packaged so that it could be sold in local supermarkets, thus enhancing our appeal.

The Rural Development Commission has done sterling work in relation to the use of redundant farm buildings. I pay tribute to the island's joint planning unit, which has recognised the need to turn redundant buildings into economic units to provide employment in the countryside. Its policy of flexibility has been widely welcomed.

The commission has been most supportive of the island's fine food initiative, which ranges from sweets to venison. We believe that that is a way to get added value out of agriculture and is all part of the island's attempts to encourage tourism. We hope that tourists will buy some of our excellent produce.

The major issue facing the countryside must be the reform of the common agricultural policy. No debate on the countryside of the United Kingdom would be complete without a tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, especially for the pressure that he successfully exerted against non-rotation

*[Mr. Field]*

on set-aside. In order to improve the landscape, it is necessary to withdraw some fields from cereal production for long periods to allow other plants to grow.

Unfortunately, the European Community Commission and Agriculture Ministers had opposite concerns. They feared that farmers would withdraw only the least productive land from production, which would not do much to reduce production. Therefore, they proposed that set-aside should be done in rotation, with the field that is set aside one year being returned to production the following year. In fact, that policy has little environmental benefit except to offer more food to the birds.

The Government successfully pressed for non-rotational set-aside to be accepted as an alternative to rotational set-aside, but non-rotational set-aside is to be at a higher rate. The farmer will have to set aside more than 15 per cent. of his total land in non-rotational set-aside. In other words, the Government were pushing in an environmental direction, but were unable to achieve more than a marginal change to a major policy, which was clearly adopted to support cereal prices. I cannot help but feel that the EC as a whole has missed a great environmental opportunity.

The second point relates to planning pressures. The reduction in hectares for a viable unit and the fact that MAFF has now established a new professional planning unit to provide advice to planning authorities on all matters in which it has an interest are to be welcomed. However, I suspect that I shall still strike a chord with all hon. Members when I say that those who represent rural areas are only too familiar with the sight of the derelict caravan that arrives and settles on a few parcels of land —and out come the polythene tunnels.

The council's planning authority is told that the land is not viable unless somebody lives on site to manage it. Then, of course, electricity, water and sewage disposal are connected to the caravan. Before we know where we are, the son or the son-in-law also lives there—so a request is put in for permission for a replacement building. The application is appealed against; the people say it will be an extremely modest bungalow, but of course once permission is granted it turns out to be a very large house —which the original caravan dwellers have no intention of occupying.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell me that the new policy planning guidelines and the lower hectare provisions are designed to restrain such nibbling fragmentation of the countryside. I very much hope that my hon. Friend, who comes fresh to his post from MAFF, will bear the problems in mind.

**Mr. David Nicholson** (Taunton): My hon. Friend's last point will find an echo in the Chamber, but at least the sort of developer that he has just mentioned would meet some resistance during the various stages of the planning application. If a gipsy were to come along and try to establish the right to build a dwelling, the planning system would discriminate in favour of him. Should not the Government deal with that problem urgently? I believe that there are plans to do so, but they must move more quickly.

**Mr. Field:** I apologise to my hon. Friend, but I shall give him the same answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Bolsover. My hon. Friend is a most sterling and stalwart defender of the countryside. No one has spoken up more than he for the sports that stand in my name. Had he waited just a moment longer, he would have heard me say something on the issue that he raised.

I have written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about a particular pressure on the countryside. I am obliged to the Isle of Wight county branch of the National Farmers Union for its help. I simply cannot resist making a claim to fame, because I am the only Member who represents an entire county branch of the NFU all on his own. It is a real pleasure.

The particular pressure to which I referred is the problem of mass trespass. The individuals involved are invariably non-tax-paying, DSS recipients who damage property, abuse landlords and intimidate walkers and their families. That, together with the nuisance of squatting, must be dealt with urgently. They always leave behind them a trail of destruction and rubbish and they are a blot on the landscape wherever they set up their broken-down encampments. They are not true diddicoys or travelling people—they are usually anarchists or just plain layabouts. They detract from people's peaceful enjoyment of the countryside.

I am pleased to note that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) has also chosen this debate for his maiden speech. He is to promote a private Member's Bill on hedgerow protection. I hope that later today we shall hear that the Government will give that Bill their full support. Sadly, the Isle of Wight county council is hellbent not only on destroying hedgerows by the extension of a rubbish tip at Standen heath, but, according to some recent press reports, that will include the destruction of an ancient boundary hedgerow of archaeological interest and some mature trees.

My hon. Friend the Minister—who I am delighted to see in his place—knows how very angry I am about the rubbish tip. When I was a county councillor, I was given positive and unequivocal assurances that the waste-derived fuel plant would consume more than 60 per cent. of the contents of our dustbins. That figure has now shrunk to between 10 and 20 per cent., which means that every assurance that I was given about no further land sites being needed for rubbish disposal once the waste-derived fuel plant was up and running have proved to be little more than worthless.

I am angry that I have been deliberately misled over the whole matter. I therefore hope that the Bill to be promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East will speed on its way to the statute book and that it will be in time to save the Standen heath hedgerow.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** My hon. Friend is making an extremely important point. Even allowing for the appalling reputation of the Isle of Wight county council in environmental matters, it is disgraceful that it is not taking a lead in this matter instead of waiting for Government legislation to protect hedgerows.

**Mr. Field:** My hon. Friend is right. However, later I shall cite a number of matters in which I believe the county council does take some excellent initiatives and plays a leading part in the countryside. I am sure that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members know that I was the only member of the county council who voted against the waste-derived fuel plant. A number of similar plants have

been constructed throughout the county, some of which have shut. I am not aware of any that has proved to be financially viable. Quite frankly, the plant on the Isle of Wight has become exactly what I said it would—a white elephant.

Next door to that plant is Dixon's, the postcard printers. Only this morning I learned that its employees have been medically screened and found to be prone to Q fever resulting from the emissions from the plant. That is a serious matter.

Unfortunately, the county council has played a major part in another ecological disaster at Wootton creek. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Minister can help me, but I shall briefly state the facts.

The council designed a plan to build a footpath over Wootton bridge. The lower half of Wootton creek is tidal. The upper half used to have sluice gates, so that the lower part, which is above the bridge, had a diurnal rhythm, but it was controlled by the sluice gates, which retained a substantial amount of salt and brackish water between the tides. Because of the alterations in the sluice gates and the archways underneath Wootton bridge, the amount of water that can now get into the upper creek during the flood tide is limited.

The whole of this delightful area, which was one of the principal heronries on the island, is now a sun-baked Saharan desert with a small trickle of water through the centre. The wading birds and the delightful aquatic life that once existed there have almost totally disappeared.

I have a letter from Dr. Clarke, the RSPB's regional officer for the Isle of Wight, who resides at Shoreham-by-Sea. He has been in touch with the various parties as a result of pressure exerted by Medina borough councillors over this serious problem. I understand that Dr. Clarke has been in touch with English Nature and the Isle of Wight county council. There has been a meeting between officers from the authorities concerned, and we can expect decisions about how this matter can be better mananged in future. I understand that, for the time being, one of the obstacles to a solution is that the authorities are waiting for a response from the owners of the lake side, Wembley plc, which is considering its legal position.

The walk through Firestone copse along the side of the upper reaches of lakeside Wootton creek was once lovely, especially for those of us who like to observe bird life. Sadly, there is now hardly any bird life there at all. It was once soft mudland, but it is now almost possible to walk across the lake. The National Rivers Authority has assured me that the new floods officer will be able to manage the situation a little better, but I doubt whether that is possible without substantial alterations to the bridge archways and by allowing more water into the area.

The Minister knows a great deal about the environment and this week the Secretary of State announced a list of green Ministers. The RSPB booklet "Action for Birds and the Environment" welcomes the appointment of green Ministers as an important part of Government machinery in furthering the protection of the environment. One of the great success stories of the Government has been improving access to the countryside. The excellent pamphlet published by the Countryside Commission entitled "Parish Paths Partnership" is an excellent manifestation of the way these policies are being disseminated and encouraged right down to the grass roots of our rural communities. But—there is always a "but" —there is still a problem that needs some ministerial intervention.

I have been critical of the island's county council, but I praise its policy on the maintenance and signposting of footpaths, which are probably the best in the United Kingdom. However, there is still a problem with the Crown estate. Two weeks ago, at my invitation, the Crown estate with a commissioner held its first public meeting in the United Kingdom on the Isle of Wight. Its presentation made much of its commitment to the heritage coastline and the fact of recently increased access to the coastline between Yarmouth and the Hampstead lodge.

For many years, the island's Ramblers Association, the Medina borough council and the county council and I have been campaigning to join up a coastal footpath so that it is possible to walk around the island. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to that is the Crown estate, with its landholdings around Osbourne house and the deteriorating condition of the sea wall around the shore which forms the boundary of Norris castle. I hope that, as a result of this debate, I can enlist the Minister's support in campaigning for the opening up of what will be one of the most delightful walks on the island.

My hon. Friends will not be surprised to learn that my final problem involves the French—or, to be exact, the fear of French invasion. In 1813, the House passed an Act for amending the roads and highways in the Isle of Wight because of the fear of invasion from France. The fact that this legislation may not have been repealed was a great comfort to my constituents in the light of recent events. The passage of the Act required a definitive map, which was produced to the other place in 1812. It detailed all the vehicular rights of way on the island.

Section 54 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 requires that those rights of way be reclassified as a BOAT —that is, a byway open to all traffic—or as a bridleway or footpath. An Appeal Court decision in 1989 places the Isle of Wight in an invidious position, so much so that the Isle of Wight Association of Parish and Town Councils passed a resolution which stated:

"this Association regrets the consequences of Section 54 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which requires a public right of way used in the past, but not for many years by vehicular traffic to be reclassified as a byway open to all traffic. It fully supports the efforts being made by the Island M.P. and the County Council to have the law changed and considers that where it can be shown there has been no use for vehicular traffic for at least 20 years (apart from farm vehicles) it should be possible for such rights of way to be reclassified as either bridleways or footpaths."

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): I was on the Committee which spent 100 hours considering the Bill leading to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and I recollect the arguments on clause 54. Plainly, the final Act did not have the good will of all the members of that Committee. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a case for some kind of monitoring mechanism to ensure that the Act works in the way it should?

**Mr. Field:** I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, because knowledge of the way in which the Bill progressed is helpful. The Act affected the nation's road systems, but the Isle of Wight was especially disadvantaged because every right of way was set down in the 1812 map and there was no room for doubt or manoeuvre. However, most of the other counties affected by the legislation have considerably

*[Mr. Field]*

fewer rights of way over which there can be no doubt. When Ministers are pressed on that issue, they invariably suggest that the Haselhurst committee will take care of that problem. Not only does it not do so, but it tends to miss the point, because it concentrates on footpaths and bridleways. It does not get down to addressing the serious problem, to which I shall come in some detail, of the modern use of motorised vehicles. Nobody is suggesting that a horse-drawn vehicle should not continue to exercise these rights—most farmers I know would welcome that. The problem has been created by the infernal internal combustion engine.

I know that the Country Landowners Association, the National Farmers Union and the National Trust branches from the Isle of Wight are looking forward to meeting a Minister in the Department of the Environment later next month to discuss these serious problems. While we understand the principle that once a road always a road, the fact is that, apart from the farmers' vehicles, these rights of way were never intended for motor vehicles, two-wheeled or four-wheeled. They were, and should be, for horse-drawn vehicles.

The previous county chairman of the National Farmers Union, Isle of Wight branch, David Jones, was woken up one night at 1 am——

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): Is he any relation of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Jones)?

**Mr. Field:** I do not think so.

Mr. Jones was woken up at 1 am by people in a convoy of vehicles who demanded to exercise their rights by driving through the centre of his farm. His reply was unprintable. The wear that such traffic puts on the fabric of the countryside is intolerable, and the law must be changed.

This year, we are celebrating the Tennyson centenary, and we can already see the harm being done to the Tennyson downs by this legal nightmare. It is true that the countryside can be turned into a series of motorway signposts by traffic regulation orders but these are slow and not very effective mechanisms, and are intrusive visually.

No mention of the French is complete without my recounting the problems that the island's fishermen are having off the Needles with Elf Aquitaine, which is searching for oil. I have sought the assistance of my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for energy and, sadly, I have even told the company that, if it does not come up with a serious offer of compensation for the island's fishermen while it carries out its survey, which is disrupting the fishing grounds, I shall have to take my boat from Cowes and join them in the blockade. If necessary, I shall make Elf seek my imprisonment, so strongly do I feel that this company has played fast and loose with the island's fishermen, some of whom are the fourth generation to fish this area. I am very angry. I hope that the action of this French oil company will not deprive the Government of at least one of their majority.

I should have liked to debate the £2·5 billion trade gap in temperate foods and the part that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is playing in trying to get British supermarkets to use United Kingdom farmers as their principal source, but I fear that time is against me. We have—when I say "we", I mean the Rural Development Commission, the National Farmers Union, the Country Landowners Association and myself—achieved some notable successes in getting Safeway, Tesco and Gateway to backload their lorries with island produce so that, in our small way, we are exporting to England. That must be good action for the English countryside and for the Isle of Wight.

10.23 am

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) introduced his motion with charm and spiced his speech with humour. I was amused by the story of what happened to the pier. He had had complaints, including a letter saying, "Dear Mr. Field, what are you going to do about the pier?" and two days later, a hurricane came along and the problem of the pier was resolved.

The hon. Gentleman raised an interesting issue of principle about the relationship between the Ministry of Defence and other Departments when dealing with ecologically valuable Ministry of Defence land. As ex-tank crew, national service, I got to know the Lulworth area pretty well and Luneburg heath in Germany. As they come out of defence requirements, after 40 years without agriculture, these areas are ecologically valuable treasures which must be preserved. Following what the hon. Gentleman said about the Isle of Wight, I must ask whether a policy on this has been agreed between the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Defence which, incidentally, issued a good policy document two years ago on this important problem.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, particularly in relation to section 54. The Act has many other controversial sections, such as 28 and 29, the so-called Sandford amendments. Eleven years later, it would be valuable to have a systematic examination of how the Act has worked. Often, the House passes legislation that we do not follow up with proper monitoring of how what we have done in good faith has worked out. I should welcome any comments from the Minister about that.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Does the hon. Gentleman recollect that the Select Committee on the Environment carried out a review of the operation of part of that legislation and, as a result, made some recommendations, most of which were acted on? Perhaps it would be appropriate if the Committee examined this matter again—after all, this was a few years ago. That might be one of the best ways to deal with the situation.

**Mr. Dalyell:** That strikes me as a sensible solution. Where Select Committees are prepared to do this kind of monitoring, that is a valuable aspect of parliamentary work.

These debates are not always the most popular subjects for those who report Parliament. I just put it on the record, although I am not prone to criticising the BBC, that I thought that it was a sign of its sense of values that, in the half-hour report on Parliament last night, there was only one reference to our major debate on Rio yesterday. That reference was to the four maiden speeches. There was not a word about the important speech from the Secretary of State for the Environment or to either of the Labour

Front-Bench speeches. The rest of us may not be able to complain, but it is extraordinary, when the BBC spends half an hour purporting to report the House of Commons and the Secretary of State for the Environment, a senior member of Cabinet, has made a speech of some significance—whether one agrees with it or not is neither here nor there—lo and behold, the BBC mentions not a word of it.

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): Is it not salutary to think that the BBC spent a fortune sending people to Rio but could not cover, relatively cheaply, the important debate here last night?

**Mr. Dalyell:** Exactly! The BBC should understand that if it is to report, it has some obligation to report serious speeches rather than what it may see as "highlights".

There are some experiences in life that remain with us for all time. I shall introduce what I am going to say now by recollecting my visit to the office of the Minister of the North in Brazil in 1989 after the Altimira conference and rally of the Amerindians on the issue of the Amazonian rain forest. Cesar Fernando Mesquita said: "Senator Gore from the United States came to see me last month and you have come to see me this month. Tell me, what have the Americans done with their forests and their countryside in Colorado and Alaska, and what are you doing about your European woods, hedgerows and countryside?" My theme is that in the light of Rio we must get our own house in order. It is no good having the Darwin initiative, which incidentally I am enthusiastic about, and arrangements through the global environment facility and lecturing Malays, people from Zaire or anywhere else, whether it be about rain forests or the savanna, unless we are able to do a great deal better in our own backyard.

At the end of my speech I shall make particular reference to the case of Mar Lodge. I do not know how anyone representing the British Government can look others in the face, including their colleagues in other countries, and say, "Let us combine to help you." How can anyone do that when we have not been able to do anything about the south side of the Cairngorms?

Rio was a staging post on an onward journey. It must be considered as an ongoing process and not an event. We shall be judged by what we do in Britain for our own countryside and not only by our actions in respect of tropical forests in other people's countries. It is a case of, "By their deeds ye shall know them." It should not be thought that those whose Ministers will meet at international conferences are uninterested in what is happening here. Those who tell others what they should be doing should have scrutinised what they themselves are doing in their backyard. That applies particularly to the 25 per cent. of the western world that are rich countries. We use 70 per cent. of the fossil fuels, 85 per cent. of chemical products and 85 per cent. of military expenditure and produce nearly 100 per cent. of space waste. There is much else that is attributable to the rich countries.

I shall this morning ask questions about what we in Britain propose to do with our countryside and how we shall give flesh to what we have promised to do at Rio and have asked others to do. I shall also make what I hope will be constructive suggestions.

First, I wish to put on record my personal enthusiasm for the Darwin initiative, though, to put it bluntly, it was not thought out. Those who perhaps should have been consulted, both at the royal botanic gardens and at Kew, were not. Their attitude is, "Give us the tools. We welcome what has been done so far and we shall do the work."

To be candid, as a Labour politician of the 1960s I have no right to criticise the Government for putting forward initiatives without thinking them through properly. The most important initiative, in retrospect, of the Wilson Government arrived precisely in that way. Harold Wilson had to think of something concrete to say when he was addressing a rally at Green's playhouse in Glasgow in 1963. He produced the idea that became the Open university. He had not consulted anyone else. He produced the idea to give flesh to his speech at the rally. The Open university grew and grew, and I hope that the Darwin initiative will go the same way.

There is nothing dishonourable in taking that approach. It is a fact, however, that Harold Wilson had not thought through his idea, any more than I think the Government have thought through the Darwin initiative. That does not mean that the initiative is wrong. We can latch on to these ideas and help them to grow, provided that we have the resources to water them. I was disappointed last night to be told by Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that he was not sure whether £5 million or £2 million was available for the Darwin initiative. I ask the Minister this morning, in the cold light of day, whether he can say anything about the money that is available for the initiative.

At Rio there was talk about reporting. I shall quote from the article written by Fred Pearce that appeared in the *New Scientist*. He had returned from Rio on 20 June. He wrote:

> "A central feature of the commission was intended to be a system of regular national reports on progress in conservation and sustainable development. Britain's environment minister, David Maclean, said confidently, early in the summit: 'The commission will have a total picture of follow-up and implementation of Agenda 21 through national reports.' He added that there was 'still some limited resistance to satisfactory language in this'. That resistance turned into a rout, leaving a final text which simply invites nations to submit reports if they wish."

I consider this to be such an important matter that I wrote to the Minister, who courteously and promptly replied. I hope that he will excuse me if I quote his letter to put it on the record. I consider it to be a matter of considerable importance for those who read *Hansard*. On 25 June, the Minister wrote:

> "Thank you for your letter of 21 June about reporting to the UN Sustainable Development Commission on the implementation of Agenda 21 and other relevant environment and development issues.
>
> The result which we achieved on the institutional arrangements for follow-up to the Earth Summit were generally highly satisfactory. The Governments agreed to establish a Sustainable Development Commission which would meet at a high level to review progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 and new developments in the area of environment and development.
>
> The UK attaches importance to regular reporting by states and by UN agencies to the Sustainable Development Commission. The institutional chapter of Agenda 21, which describes the functions of the Commission, says that the Commission should consider information provided by governments 'including . . . in the form of periodic communications or national reports'."

I should like to know what the Minister has in mind for our own national reports. As I have said, it is a matter of setting an example for others. We shall not get very far

*[Mr. Dalyell]*

with Brazilians and Malays in asking them to produce national reports if we do not make clear the example that we are setting.

**The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean):** Perhaps it will help the hon. Gentleman if I indicate now what we have in mind. We are working on the second update of the White Paper "This Common Inheritance". We intend to take into account some of the decisions that were taken at Rio. We are well advanced on the route of writing what will be the White Paper and publishing it. We see the annual White Paper return that we shall make, together with the new statistical digest that we shall publish, as forming the basis of our national report for the Sustainable Development Commission.

When I was discussing these matters with Kamal Nath and Saifullah Khan of India and Pakistan last week, they were interested in our annual report and they had copies of "This Common Inheritance". We shall see whether we can further turn that report into a model that other countries can follow, with clear targets and honest admissions when we have not met our targets, while bringing in new targets and keeping the process rolling forward year after year.

**Mr. Dalyell:** That answer is not only courteous, but helpful. It means that I can spare the House the rest of the letter. I thank the Minister for his reply, which takes us rather further, on first hearing, on this important subject.

What will be done about the people-to-people networks? The Minister will know of the contribution of Christoph Imboden of the International Council for Bird Preservation to the conference the day before yesterday. I shall read one paragraph from the document "From research ... to action, From birds ... to people" produced by the ICBP. It says:

"once local people and communities have been made aware of the close connection between their own welfare and the sustainable use of resources, between quality of life and diversity of the environment, they must be mobilised to become advocates for environmental conservation. They must carry the message into all parts of society and, above all, seek to influence decision-makers in Governments and the private sector. All around the world, in developed and developing countries alike, non-governmental grassroots movements have been the prime driving force that has advanced conservation awareness and concern."

The argument is put extremely succinctly.

How do we set up benefit-sharing arrangements between countries providing potentially valuable biological resources and between those who develop ideas? perhaps the Minister will intervene on this point if he has the answer on top of his head. What was meant by the references of the Secretary of State at the natural history museum and in the House yesterday to regional networks? What is meant in that context by the word "network"? It may be the germ of an attractive idea. Would the Minister like to enlarge on the point, or would he not like to very much?

**Mr. Maclean:** Not now.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Not at this stage. I have a further question which follows the Minister's answer on 24 June. I asked the Minister

"in what ways he proposes that the Darwin initiative will help the developing countries to attain compensation for the commercial exploitation of their genetic resources."

The Minister replied:

"The Darwin initiative aims to support the implementation of the bio-diversity convention. That convention facilitates the setting up of benefit sharing arrangements between countries providing potentially valuable biological resources and those who develop them."

Perhaps more properly in his speech than now, the Minister may like to explain how the mechanism of the benefit-sharing arrangements will work. I asked the Minister

"what relationship he proposes between the Darwin initiative and the work of the consultative group for international agricultural research."

He replied:

"We are still considering how to involve existing scientific and environmental groups in the Darwin initiative. However, the work of the consultative group for international agricultural research, which includes the development of higher yield crop varieties and the study of sustainable agricultural practices, shares the same long-term goal of the sustainable use of the world's resources promoted by the Darwin initiative."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. *201*.]

Is there an idea of community-to-community sustained relationships? In the view of many at the natural history museum who devote their lives to these issues, it is the community-to-community, sustained and continuing relationship, to which I referred last night in my speech on Rio, that matters.

My next question applies to our countryside as much as it does abroad. What is being done about the establishment of an inventory of ecosystems? I am told that there is a strong argument for the establishment of inventories of species as a priority. We greatly value the work of Robin Pellew, Mark Collins and others at the monitoring centre in Cambridge on global diversity in our country and abroad. The status of the earth's living resources compiled by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre gives the information baseline on the status, threats, utilisation and management of the planet's biological wealth.

The global diversity strategy compiled by the world resources unit, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Environment Programme provides guidelines for actions to save, study and use the Earth's biotic wealth sustainably and equitably. We are trying to put biodiversity on the map. That is one of the things that Rio achieved and for which the Brazilian hosts should properly be thanked. They have done something miraculous in providing a conference of that size without incident. Once again, the Brazilian state deserves our thanks.

We must learn to live in harmony with nature. The human impact on the biosphere is producing environmental stress and endangering the planet's capacity for sustained life. Depleting our ecological capital means that we are getting an amber warning. Soon it will turn to a red alert.

I want to use this debate as an opportunity to talk succinctly and quietly to the Minister about the example of Mar Lodge. As a former Scottish Whip and a highlander, the Minister may be tempted to say, "That is a matter for the Scottish Office. Leave it to the highlanders. Leave it to the people in Edinburgh." I am afraid that that will not do, because Mar Lodge is a potential world heritage site. We are talking about the conservation of the whole south side of the Cairngorms.

Just as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight, quite legitimately, talked about the Isle of Wight, I shall talk

briefly about the part of Scotland that was the subject of an Adjournment debate I initiated, not only with the good will of, but at the request of, my late friend, Alick Buchanan-Smith, when he knew that he was terminally ill.

The background is that the best part of the ancient Caledonian forest and the best part of the ancient European forest will be destroyed within one or, at the most, two decades if action is not taken. In the past, very rich people would take the Mar Lodge estate for a season and go stalking when it suited them, but stalking has now become an industry. To justify the enormous sums—thousands of pounds—paid by stalkers for one or two days of stalking, one must have a huge quantity of deer. I have never seen so many deer as on the Mar Lodge estate. The does are not culled as they perhaps should be, because it is necessary to keep them in such numbers to satisfy the stalkers.

As the Minister knows, when that number of young deer are involved, the young trees do not have a chance, and nor does natural reseeding. Adam Watson and Dick Balharrie of the Nature Conservancy Council compare the trees in that area with 80-year-old men. Now is the last chance of natural reseeding, yet there is no possibility of that happening with the number of deer that are now on the Mar estate.

The Government reply that they hope to achieve a management agreement at some time. The estate is in the ownership of Mr. Kluge, who is an octogenarian and a millionaire several times over. You will not hear from me any personal criticism of Mr. Kluge. Rather, the reverse—for two reasons. He has been a very good landlord compared with previous landlords, and has been infinitely patient while the consortium led by Simon Pepper and others of the World Wide Fund for Nature prepare a proper bid for the Mar estate. Mr. Kluge has shown great patience—but sooner or later, he will want to sell and his patience will run out.

If we are serious about preserving Mar, something must be done. I know of no potential owner on the horizon. Any owner that agreed to carry the responsibility of Mar would have to be enormously wealthy—but that might be one answer from the Government's point of view.

I would respect a very rich owner if he agreed to the desiderata set down by most ecologists. They include reducing the number of deer, but that would make the estate unprofitable. In fact, it would incur an enormous loss, because of the diminished stalking fees. In those circumstances, one must question the role of the state. I understand, having had friendly personal interviews with the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)—who is full of goodwill in this matter, but who I suspect has difficulties with the Treasury—that there is no possibility of the Treasury's releasing the amount of money that would satisfy Mr. Kluge's present demands.

What is to be done? I want to propose for the first time on the Floor of the House one constructive route that the Government ought to try. I suggest that they go to see Mr. Kluge personally. So far, negotiations have been conducted through his agent, and he has received no direct approach from the Government, When I suggested that the former president of the National Trust, the distinguished Earl of Wemyss and March—who is acknowledged to have a considerable background in such matters—should go to see Mr. Kluge, he agreed. However, a spanner was dropped in that particular works. No one will have much of a chance of pursuing the matter without Government backing.

**Mr. Bellingham:** When the hon. Gentleman and I served on the Committee that considered the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill, there was debate on the Red Deer Commission and the powers that it has to intervene compulsorily to cull a herd of deer that has grown too big. Is there not a role for the commission in the case that the hon. Gentleman cites? If the herd at Mar has grown completely out of control, does not the commission have the power to cull some of the deer?

**Mr. Dalyell:** The commission does not have the power to reduce for ecological reasons the herd to the extent needed, because it would then risk making the Mar estate unprofitable. That is where huge amounts of money are involved.

The Government ought to suggest formally to Mr. Kluge that they would be willing to accept the establishment of a Kluge memorial park in that area of the Cairngorms, provided that Mr. Kluge was prepared to contribute a sum of money towards the establishment, for ever and ever in the ancient forest of Caledon, of something approaching a world heritage site.

I do not think that that is fanciful. I do not know whether the Minister has visited Jerusalem. On the road to the Hebrew university, one sees huge faculties bearing memorial tablets that say they are in memory of Rachel and Rubin Goldstein, of Ezra Erlichman, and so on. It is an American tradition—particularly an American-Jewish tradition—to donate money on a memorial basis. There is nothing dishonourable about that—it is an accepted practice.

It ought to be put without delay to Mr. Kluge, who has been a good landlord of the Mar estate, that he might like to think in terms of a Kluge memorial park. Failing that, and having immersed myself in the subject, I do not see any other constructive solution.

This matter is one for the Minister's Department and not only for the Scottish Office. In fact, it is a matter for the British Government. The Cairngorms are a potential major world heritage site, and Mar is the jewel in that crown. I thank the House for its patience.

10.56 am

**Mr. Peter Ainsworth** (Surrey, East): I am delighted to support the motion, and I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech. The debate concerns issue of great interest not only to those who work and live in the countryside but to those who visit it. It touches on issues of some profundity, because the well-being, appearance and size of the countryside have been entrusted to our generation—as to every generation—for a relatively short time.

The countryside that we hold in trust now evolved gradually over thousands of years. With the pace of change in our rural communities faster than ever before, and given that they are confronted by new threats as well as new opportunities, it is vital that we nurture what is ours today, so that we may have pride in the countryside that we pass on to our children and to future generations.

The constituency that I have the privilege of representing stretches from the southern tip of Greater London in the north to Kent in the east, and to Sussex in

*[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]*

the south. It has one foot in the countryside and one foot in the town, so straddling the north downs—which have for so long served as a natural barrier against the southward spread of London.

The area was represented in the House in one way or another, and in whole or in part, by Sir Geoffrey Howe for 24 years. Following a boundary change in 1971, the constituency took its present shape, which is coterminous with the area covered by Tandridge district council.

I am sure that the House and the whole country acknowledges the debt that we all owe to Sir Geoffrey for his remarkable record of public service over many years —notably as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary. He managed to combine his high office with an extraordinary commitment to local people and local issues. His sometimes avuncular and always perspicacious attention to the latter has alone set his successor a formidable and exciting challenge.

I know that all hon. Members will join me in congratulating Sir Geoffrey on his recent elevation to another place, where no doubt he will continue to exercise his commitment to public service for many years to come.

Sir Geoffrey was not the first Member of Parliament for the area to achieve great distinction. Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston were both briefly Members of Parliament for Bletchingley, which was once a rotten borough close to the Pilgrims' way, and is now an attractive village close to the M25.

There is still much glorious countryside, and there are still many buildings and villages to celebrate in Surrey—but there is no mistaking the fact that they lead a fragile existence today. I am happy to say that that has been recognised, and much of the area is now covered by the green belt. I applaud the Government's outstanding record on enlarging and reinforcing the green belt in recent years.

The Secretary of State for Transport's announcement yesterday on link roads has ensured that the M25 remains a controversial issue. There is no denying that its advent did much to remove traffic from the towns and villages along the main roads in my constituency—but there is also no denying that it cuts a noisy and unsightly swathe through the green belt countryside. No doubt the Minister for the Environment and Countryside is aware of the local concern about the plan for widening the motorway to eight lanes along its entire length, and yesterday's announcement that there was in effect to be a 14-lane highway a few miles to the north-west does not diminish that concern.

I do not wish to dwell on the matter now, although it has some relevance—but if I say that, as well as being bisected by the M25, my constituency is flanked on its western border by the M23 and in the south by Gatwick airport, and is traversed by a railway line which appears to be decreasingly available for passenger transport and is shortly to be used for freight traffic from the Channel tunnel, hon. Members will understand my anxiety and that of my constituents about the impact of transport demands on the countryside.

There is clearly a need for balance. Just as it would be unwise to ignore the pressing need for a first-rate transport infrastructure in the south-east of England, and the importance of that to the economy as a whole, so nobody should underestimate the profound, sudden and irreversible consequences of change in a landscape which until recently had changed little for centuries. The promised environmental studies on the M25, with the likely public inquiry, will no doubt give such matters, and the question of pollution, the most serious consideration.

The need for balance extends to housing and business development. The Minister and his predecessors are to be congratulated on their sensible and imaginative approach. The countryside, and the villages which are an integral part of it, are not museum pieces. Great care must be taken to balance the need for conservation with the need to foster a thriving rural economy. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) dwelt on that topic.

The task is difficult, I know, and with the recent changes affecting agriculture, notwithstanding the recent success of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the discussions on the common agricultural policy, it is becoming no easier.

I must apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House, if I have to leave the Chamber before the end of the debate, but I hope that you will agree that I have good reason to do so. I hope this afternoon to celebrate the renovation of some near-derelict farm buildings in my constituency. Those buildings now house three separate businesses—one in the 200-year-old barn, one in the cowshed and one in the old milking shed. Such development represents the best of what can be done with imagination, flexibility and, of course, restraint.

In that connection, I welcome planning policy guidance note 7, which, along with the rural action initiative, emphasises the development of the social programmes, the pilot countryside employment programmes and a host of other new initiatives which show the Government's commitment to fostering both the rural environment and the rural economy—in truth, those interests are indivisible.

Finally, I must mention hedgerows, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight also referred. Hedgerows form an essential part of our countryside heritage, clearly contributing to the familiar pattern of the landscape. They are also a vital natural habitat for all forms of wildlife, including butterflies. Despite the Government's recent success in fostering new hedgerow plantings, figures produced last year by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, in a report jointly sponsored by the Department of the Environment, suggest a net loss of hedgerows in England and Wales of about 65,000 miles —21 per cent. of the total—since 1984.

Neglect is the principal culprit, and I look forward with interest to the scheme that I believe that the Minister will soon introduce to promote better hedgerow management. However, about 2,000 miles of hedgerows a year are lost through active destruction, and it is to prevent such unjustifiable destruction that I have presented to the House for a First Reading a private Member's Bill to protect hedgerows. I look forward to consulting all interested parties to reach an acceptable, workable and enforceable set of proposals, which I trust will at the appropriate time command the support of all hon. Members.

11.7 am

**Mr. Alex Carlisle** (Montgomery): What a pleasure it is to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth). The clarity of his thought

and the way in which he delivered his speech promise us much from him in the years to come. The hon. Gentleman has many choices to make about the examples that he may wish to follow—whether he is to be a Melbourne, a Palmerston or a Howe. That may be a difficult choice to make; having heard him, I hope that he will simply be himself.

We in Wales are extremely proud of the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Sir Geoffrey Howe. It is not to be forgotten that Surrey, East was represented for so many years by a Llanelli boy, who was one of the most distinguished members of my circuit of the Bar—the Wales and Chester circuit—and who has been for many years an honorary member of that circuit.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I thought that Sir Geoffrey Howe came from Port Talbot.

**Mr. Carlisle:** If it is Port Talbot rather than Llanelli, I stand corrected. I was speaking from memory. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right.

Although on one occasion Sir Geoffrey Howe was compared in the House to a dead sheep, those of us who were there will recall one of the most dramatic moments of recent years when Sir Geoffrey made the very short speech in the House that ended the reign of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister. To sit 30 or so feet away from him as he delivered that speech was certainly one of the greatest dramatic moments that I have experienced, A similar auspicious occasion may arise at some point in the career of the hon. Member for Surrey, East. If so, I hope that he rises to it with the skill and dignity of his predecessor.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on choosing this subject for debate. It is not often that those of us who represent rural constituencies have the opportunity to talk directly about matters affecting the countryside. My constituency of Montgomery is, I believe, the most rural of all constituencies. It certainly has the highest percentage of its population employed directly in agriculture—something like 15 times the national average. It will not surprise hon. Members, therefore, to know that the future of the rural environment, particularly of the rural communities, is of prime concern to me.

There is a great difference between the view of the countryside and the view from the countryside. That difference is not always articulated clearly in the House, despite the best efforts of those Members with rural constituencies. I should like to dwell for a few moments on that difference.

We who live and work in and represent the countryside welcome the view of the countryside that is taken by others. We welcome the arrival of tourists, for they bring interest and great economic advantage to rural areas such as Montgomeryshire, an area—soon, I hope, to be a county once again—which has invested wisely in its tourist potential and has produced many high-value tourist attractions.

However, the Government are sometimes extremely unimaginative in their approach to tourist attractions. Recently I visited the bird sanctuary and butterfly house at Llanfyllin in my constituency. It is a beautiful tourist attraction, of much interest and run scientifically, but the owners are not allowed to put a sign on the nearest trunk road saying that their tourist attraction exists, because, says the Welsh Office, they do not have 25,000 visitors a year. Quite apart from the fact that it would be difficult to bring 25,000 tourists every year up the road leading to the site, it is difficult to understand how they can attract even half that number—which they probably could accommodate comfortably—if they are unable to tell people of their existence by putting up a sign on the nearest trunk road.

The A-road on which the present sign is displayed carries a very small amount of traffic. In inclement weather only brave drivers travel over the Berwyn between Welshpool and Bala. The fainthearts, who are the majority —and probably sensibly so, in the view of the police—go the long way round along the A5 where my constituents are not allowed to erect a sign. Much more could be done, without damaging the environment, to allow for the signposting of tourist attractions.

We welcome the view of the countryside taken even by people who move into Montgomeryshire to live. There has never been xenophobia in Montgomeryshire about people —even, dare I say it, the English—moving into our part of rural Wales. It is an interesting part of rural Wales because it embraces the features of a border county, English speaking, and the features of a Welsh rural county, Welsh speaking and as Welsh as anywhere else in Wales. I fear, however, that we may begin to become a little xenophobic if current planning legislation remains unchanged.

I wish to raise two connected points in this context, both of which are of great importance, cause weekly concern and feature regularly in my constituency surgeries. The first relates to the absence of any need for planning consent for the occupation of a property as a second home. As the Minister knows, this concern applies throughout many rural areas. It certainly applies throughout rural Wales. It is not that we wish to stop people having second homes—there are many properties that, being realistic, probably have no other use—but we wish to ensure that our villages remain part of the community and are not turned into very pretty and prettified, but rather sterile, museum pieces. There is need for some planning control, albeit relatively loose, to be exercised over the proliferation of second homes.

In some counties in Wales, notably in the old county of Meirionnydd, there are villages where second homes dominate and where the local community has been virtually excluded by price. The fact that people are able to come in and buy cheaply old properties as second homes causes great irritation to local builders, for when they develop small estates of houses they are often faced with section 106 agreements that restrict the clientele who can buy those properties.

There is no doubt that section 106 agreements have their place and I am not suggesting that they should be removed—quite the opposite. I believe, however, that the section 106 agreement, which causes problems for builders, would be far more acceptable if builders felt that some control was exercised over the purchase of cheap, old properties by outsiders, particularly as second homes. A balance has not quite been reached.

The view from the countryside is very different from the idea of "The Good Life". As the Minister, who now has great and valuable experience of the countryside and its concerns and who is much respected throughout the farming community, knows, living and working in the countryside can be as harsh and as heavy as living and working anywhere else.

*[Mr. Carlisle]*

I make not a political point but a factual statement when I say that living on and from agriculture is becoming increasingly difficult. The small farm of 100 acres, or less, in the hills of Montgomeryshire which 30 years ago employed perhaps a dozen people can now barely sustain one family at the poverty line. Farmers often bring their accounts to me to show what is really going on. Those accounts frequently show profits of well under £5,000 a year to keep a whole family.

Nor is it easy to diversify. If one is farming in Llanbrynmair, Trefeglwys or Llangynog, there is not too much passing trade for the love spoons that some may think can be made there and then sold at the farm gate. We do not have the tradition, the land or the weather to sell cider at a farm gate, as happens in Normandy. Would that we could: life would be more pleasant on a summer's evening.

Village shops are closing. In my village of Berriew—which many times has been the jewel in Wales's crown and has repeatedly been voted the best-kept village in Wales—to our great regret the village bakery closed earlier this year, not because the family that owned it did not want to continue to run it, but because the cost of meeting European regulations would prove prohibitive and out of proportion to the bakery's turnover. We see many such examples being replicated, with village shops closing and village pubs becoming unviable.

The Minister will know of the tremendous network of chapels in Wales that have been the back-bone of the local community certainly since the 19th century, some of which grew when people decided that there must be some way of resisting the wicked Tory landlords. Through the chapels, there was built up a tradition of community and self-help, which sustained not only the Welsh language and culture but the communities themselves. People helped one another in times of difficulty, provided work for one another and inter-married, which is one reason why many people in Wales are related.

Much of that community strength is going. Even the most basic of village institutions—the school—is threatened by difficulties that now beset governors, because formula funding seems not to recognise peripherality as it should. This week, I received two letters which I can describe only as manic from depressed school governors who simply do not know how they can go on doing the job. They will probably resign in despair. I saw the Secretary of State for Wales yesterday and, while he was sympathetic to my view of village schools, he did not appear to have anything remedial to offer.

We have seen welcome economic development in rural mid-Wales. The Development Board for Rural Wales has been extremely successful. People change and companies grow up. Commercial attitudes change. I was recently given the honour of being elected chairman of the special share trust of Wynnstay and Clwyd Farmers plc—a farming co-operative which recently turned itself into a plc, dramatically facing the modern world, taking over other businesses and profitably turning over about £30 million a year in a very disadvantageous agricultural environment. That is an example of the best that happens. Such initiative needs as much help as Government can give. I hope, therefore, that the commitment to the Development Board for Rural Wales will continue and that similar commitments may be given in other parts of the country.

Perhaps the greatest crisis that we face in rural mid-Wales is connected not with agriculture or poor wages but with the lack of somewhere for young people to live. When I first became Member of Parliament for Montgomery in 1983, there was no difficulty when young couples came along wanting council houses because they were getting married or setting up home together. Montgomeryshire district council was able to provide them, and the Development Board for Rural Wales was able to provide homes for new workers moving into the county. That is not so any more. Many local young people, who are in work, are now homeless. That is not acceptable.

We are told that Tai Cymru—Housing for Wales—is providing, or at least facilitating the provision of, the houses that are needed through housing associations, but I am afraid that that is not true. Every week, I receive letters and at every constituency surgery decent young people come in and tell me their situation.

I believe that we shall do great damage to our rural areas if we do not provide homes at least for our own indigenous population, for they will be forced to leave. The gain of places such as Telford, Birmingham and Wolverhampton will be our loss. It will be an irreparable loss, because there will be no young people left to do the skilled jobs for which they have been educated by what has been an excellent education system.

My final point—there is much that I should like to say, but many other Members wish to speak—is about the relationship between agriculture and the environment. In their publication, "Action for the Countryside", the Government emphasised some manifesto commitments that were welcome, one of which is the countryside stewardship scheme. The amount that has been allocated to the scheme—£2·9 million, I believe, over three years—is small indeed when set alongside the agriculture budget. The future of farming—and if there are no sheep on the hills in my area, there will be nothing on the hills but dereliction—depends on seizing the money that is rightly available for the future of the environment and marrying it to agriculture in a constructive partnership.

There was a time when hill farmers in mid-Wales perhaps did not see much sense in restoring hedgerows that had been removed years before, in leaving fields fallow, in planting wild flowers, in creating countryside trails, in reducing the stocking density and in clearing footpaths, but they see the sense of all those measures now and will take them not only because it will put money into their pockets but because they recognise truly the interests of environmental and countryside management. They are surviving on a shoestring. I therefore urge the Government to consider—this may be a happy consequence for the environment of subsidiarity perhaps—ways of spending money on the environment that would benefit the agriculture industry. If that produced real achievements, perhaps there would be less of a difference between the view of the countryside and the view from the countryside.

11.30 am

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Stamford and Spalding): It is always a pleasure to speak following the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), and I enjoyed his summary of some of the traditions and history of the land of my ancestors.

I begin by declaring an interest—I am not sure that it is relevant to my remarks today, but for the sake of order I will declare it—in that I own a few acres in Lincolnshire and have a small flock of sheep there. I have declared that in the Register of Members' Interests.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on being successful in the ballot and on ably presenting his motion. I began increasingly to regret, as he presented his constituency in such an attractive way, that I had spent only a few brief hours on his island. I resolved, as I listened to him, to return there with my family and to stay rather longer.

Today's debate has already been distinguished by a particularly able maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth). He set out succinctly and ably the differing interests of his constituency. I am sure that Members in all parts of the House greatly appreciated his obviously sincere tribute to his great predecessor, Lord Howe.

The motion presents us with a good opportunity to congratulate the Government on achievements for which they have not received sufficient credit. Without doubt, this has been the most environmentally conscious and sensitive Government we have ever had in our history. That applies to previous Conservative, and to Labour and Liberal Administrations.

I endorse the motion and everything that my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight said, and I congratulate the Government on a series of environmental initiatives. Many of them have been, or are in the process of being, copied by other countries, and that must be the greatest form of flattery. One thinks of the environmentally sensitive areas scheme and the farm woodland scheme, in which I participated in a small way.

We must recognise that, if we care for the conservation of the countryside, we must have a viable and prosperous agriculture. Without that, there is no chance of our having the attractive, neat, well cared for countryside that those who are concerned for the environment wish to maintain. The resource costs for the rest of the community of keeping the countryside pretty and environmentally healthy, so that people may appreciate it, without there being a farming community with the resources to work it would be horrific and out of the question. So we must ask whether we are willing to ensure that we have the conditions to maintain a viable and prosperous agriculture.

Agriculture is the most significant industry in my constituency. I know whereof I speak when I say that agriculture is going through a crisis of confidence in the future, and that crisis is shared by every other major developed country. Essentially, it is a crisis of over-production brought about not by the malfunctioning of markets but by the subversion of markets through governmental action over the last 50 years.

I am not targeting in particular the European Community or British Governments who, before we entered the Community and since the beginning of the last war, decided to subsidise agriculture. The level of agricultural support in the United States has always been comparable with that in the EC. The level in other OECD countries has been greater than in the EC or in the United States, and probably the greatest offenders have been Sweden, Switzerland and, worst of all, Japan. That has brought about a crisis of over-production analogous to over-production crises in other sectors of economic activity, such as in steel and shipbuilding in the 1960s and 1970s, brought about by Government subsidies and similar action in many parts of the world.

The crisis of over-production in agriculture is the cloud overhanging every investment decision taken by every farmer in Britain today, particularly as he ponders the future, wondering whether he will be able to continue farming to retirement and have a worthwhile business to hand on to his children.

The action that farmers must take to overcome that crisis is twofold. One way to ensure survival against that background is to be a lowest-cost producer, producing goods more efficiently than any competitor, so that, so long as there is a demand for one's commodities, one will have a market share. The alternative is to decide that one does not have the necessary competitive economic advantages to become a lowest-cost producer. In that situation, one must specialise, looking for new niches and products with which to attract the consumer. In other words, one must find a new way of using one's capital resources—for a farmer, land is the most important—and change one's business mix to develop a new market.

The same applies to shipbuilding, steel production or the manufacture of shoe buttons, should there be a crisis of over-production in the shoe button market. Many farmers believe that they can become lowest-cost producers and that, so long as there is a market for their production—for example, for cereals—they will survive, provided that they are not inhibited by governmental or other external action from bringing those advantages fully to bear. Many farmers, perhaps not consciously, are adopting the other route and are becoming niche players, going in for new products and using their skills and land to develop them.

However, I am often depressed when I visit the workshops and storerooms in my constituency of Geest, the largest fresh food distributor in Britain, and see piles of new vegetables. I call them new not because they have recently been invented but because they have only recently appeared regularly in the shopping baskets of British housewives—food such as aubergines, asparagus and artichokes.

Such vegetables are produced in temperate time zones. They look attractive as they wait to be distributed throughout the country. When I ask where they come from, the answer is usually Holland, France or Germany. Generally, they come from some other country in Europe, probably in the same climate zone as ours. It is sad that our farmers have not always been enterprising enough to go in for such new products, which do not have a Community support regime for producing and selling them.

There are various reasons for that state of affairs, which I will not go into at this stage. Suffice it to say that marketing co-operatives on the continent seem to be better organised. We in Britain have many lessons to learn from their activities.

We must ask to what extent governmental action, at the national or Community level, will ensure for the future a

*[Mr. Quentin Davies]*

viable basis for agriculture in Britain. We have debated the recent agreement at the Agriculture Council on the modified MacSharry proposals. To what extent will that lay the basis for a viable and prosperous agriculture in the United Kingdom and enable farmers to take one of the decisions to which I referred—to become a lowest-cost producer or to go for new products?

There is no question but that the achievements of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at the Agriculture Council were memorable. Practically all the farmers in my constituency and many others said that it was impossible for the Minister to go to Brussels and successfully resist and remove from the MacSharry proposals all the elements that appeared to have the support of the other 11 member states and would discriminate against large farmers—which in practice means British farmers as opposed to those in the rest of the Community. Yet my right hon. Friend returned having completely got rid of the pernicious discriminatory proposals. It was an exceedingly fine negotiating achievement and there was a great sigh of relief. More generously than that—farmers are capable of being generous—a great well of congratulation met my right hon. Friend on his return when he announced what he had achieved.

Nevertheless, one must consider the medium and long term, and ask whether the new agreement establishes a new basis for the CAP that will give us some stability for the foreseeable future. The jury is out. If the new agreement is to provide a stable, and at least relatively permanent, basis for agriculture in the Community, it must meet three criteria. First, it must give some assurance that the continually increasing burden of the CAP on the Community budget will be to some extent limited. The judgment on that must be slightly ambiguous, because in the near future the CAP budget will increase as a result of the proposals. The Commission calculates that after three or four years agricultural expenditure will fall. That calculation must depend on several assumptions about international agricultural prices, so is hypothetical. Therefore, the jury is out on that one.

The second criterion is whether the new regime will allow us to reach accord in the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations. Clearly, that is necessary. If it does not, we shall have to reconsider the matter. Again, the jury is out. We have some complicated, difficult negotiations afoot. We have unquestionably thrown the Americans on the defensive with the agreement, but let us see what happens. It is too early to predict the result.

Thirdly, and precisely for all the reasons that I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, if the proposals become the basis of a new stable regime in the Community, what will be their impact on the viability and profitability of agriculture? I must admit to a number of fundamental reservations here. The agreement is unquestionably far and away the best that we could conceivably have achieved in present circumstances. We must all be very happy with that. However, that does not necessarily mean that we should all pretend that that will be the basis of the CAP for the next five to 25 years. The agreement includes some fundamental shortcomings and contradictions which were not inserted at British instigation but remain a fundamental part of the proposals.

One of those is compulsory set-aside. If a farmer is to qualify for compensation under the scheme, 15 per cent. of all cereal land or of all land down to combinable crops, to use the jargon in the proposals, will have to be set aside. Let us think about that for a second or two. If you came from Mars, and I know that you do not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without any particular prejudices, preconceived notions or habits of mind, to look at how the human race organises its agricultural affairs in this country or the European Community, and you discovered that there was a crisis of over-production, particularly in the cereal and livestock sectors, and that it was proposed to take 15 per cent. of that land out of production, irrespective of whether it was the most or least productive land, of whether it yielded 5 or even 6 tonnes of grain an acre in a good year or only 2 or 3 tonnes and of the profitability and technical and economic efficiency of cultivating it, you would say that something had gone peculiarly wrong with the financial sense and economic logic of the human race.

It cannot make any economic sense over the long haul to take out of production 15 per cent. of grade 1 land in Lincolnshire and, at the same time, to grow cereals on grade 3 or 4 land in the Cotswolds or Scotland. For the medium term, it would be impossible to make the fundamental readjustments that economic logic might suggest, but we should not deceive ourselves: what we have is an anomaly, not to say an economically contradictory state of affairs, which will increase and not reduce the average cost of production.

Another shortcoming is the "quota system" for the livestock sector. If we are to have a viable, competitive agriculture and if we are to encourage our farmers to respond to new market stimuli, to develop new products, to switch their mix of production as the market changes and to do what every business must do if we are to have a prosperous economy, the last thing we want is to freeze the existing mix of production by a system of quotas establishing crippling financial penalties if people do switch their mix of production in that way. That cannot be a rational or viable basis for agriculture in the long term.

Perhaps the most anomalous and curious aspect of the proposals and the one we should reflect on longest is the concept of compensation on the basis of average yields. The new proposals provide that, for the 85 per cent. of combinable land that remains in production, the 15 per cent. having been set aside, the support prices available will fall, but that farmers will be compensated for the shortfall on the basis of average yields.

What does that mean? It means that, if previously the yield was below average, the farmer will be better off—he will receive a windfall—but if previously the farmer was more efficient than average and his yield was higher, he will suffer. In other words, we are back to the bad old business that the Labour Government used to specialise in, of penalising success and rewarding failure. That cannot be the basis of a sound, efficient, profitable agriculture any more than it can possibly be the basis of a sound and profitable sector of economic activity in any other area.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** Is not the hon. Gentleman being unfair to farmers with his analogy on crop yields? A farmer on poor soil may have a below-average crop yield, but be extremely effective compared with a farmer with a high average crop yield on fertile soil.

**Mr. Davies:** The hon. Gentleman has not entirely followed the logic of my remarks. Resources are always scarce: capital resources are scarce, as are good farmers. In a rational world—we are far from that in agriculture—those resources would be concentrated on the most fertile soils. We would not use them on grade 3 or 4 soils to produce cereals. It is one thing to say that that would be a sensible arrangement in a rational world, but we cannot achieve that tomorrow—I am not suggesting that we should. But we should have no illusions about the anomalies that exist in our present arrangements.

What is the solution? It cannot be to repatriate agricultural policy from the European Community. That would be disastrous as other member states would be prepared to subsidise their agriculture to a greater extent than we would. As long as there is a single market, it would be impossible to prevent the sale here of agricultural produce from abroad, which would be subject to greater subsidies. When sold in this country, it would effectively put our farmers out of business, without any gain to us. Therefore, repatriation is not an option.

Within the context of the European Community, we need to continue with the policies we have been pursuing for the past 10 years or so. We should continue to try and introduce an increasing element of economic rationality and to work towards a free market. Where it is necessary to introduce artificialities or subsidies for sound social or environmental reasons, we should call such policies and budgets social and environmental, because that is what they are. We should try to create an environment in which farmers—who are as enterprising and hard working a group of entrepreneurs as exist anywhere in the world—have the same scope as other sections of our community to achieve prosperity.

11.53 am

**Ms. Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall): The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) spoke articulately, as usual, about the importance of agriculture in our countryside. As I had a rural upbringing, I am well aware of that. However, I wish to move the debate on to other activities in the countryside whose importance we must recognise: recreation and leisure.

Figures produced by the Countryside Commission show how many people visit the countryside each year and how much money that generates for the countryside. They show that about £12 billion is spent in rural districts, and an estimated £1·76 billion of that—almost £2 billion—stays in the countryside in the form of wages, rents and profits, and supports up to 500,000 full-time and part-time jobs in the countryside. That is as many as, if not more than, the number of people currently employed in agriculture. More people have been employed in the countryside over the past decade as we have turned to the countryside for leisure and recreation.

We need to set priorities and get the balance right so that we use the countryside for peaceful activities and, sometimes, for sports and recreation which, if not controlled properly with the support of the governing bodies, can lead to disruption. It is important to get that balance right.

I should like the Government to give greater priority to the public's interest in visiting the countryside by allowing greater representation of countryside sport and recreation on agencies such as the Countryside Commission, the Sports Council, the National Parks Authority, the National Rivers Authority and the Forestry Commission. People with an interest in sport and recreation must have their say in the co-ordinating organisations set up to promote and protect the countryside.

I am also interested in young people from our inner cities making use of the countryside. With the increasing cuts in local education authority expenditure, a number of outdoor recreational centres are at risk. The Central Council of Physical Recreation has drawn attention to 45 outdoor education centres that have been placed in jeopardy and will have to close unless they receive help.

Outdoor education is recognised as part of the national curriculum for physical education. I firmly believe that it should be part of the national curriculum. There is no point its being included in the national curriculum without the necessary resources and residential centres to enable young people to enjoy it. My experience of working with young people from inner cities and joining them for outdoor pursuit weeks has shown me the benefits to be gained for those children from just one week, or even less, spent in the countryside. We must try to promote and increase such outdoor activities for young people, who would not otherwise have the opportunity.

**Mr. Barry Field:** Either before the hon. Lady came to the House or since she has been a Member of Parliament, has she come across an organisation called Country Childrens Holiday? It is an old London charity. Many of us who enjoy living in the countryside have had the pleasure of having children from London to stay for a holiday of a week or two. Without that initiative, those children would not have a holiday in the countryside or possibly have any experience of it. I believe that the organisation is still functioning and is widely patronised. I am sure that some of the hon. Lady's constituents have used it.

**Ms. Hoey:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention—of course, I have heard of that organisation, and have worked with it. It does sterling work for those living in inner cities. However, I was talking about young people enjoying the countryside, not just to walk and witness nature conservation, but to participate in outdoor pursuits such as canoeing on waterways, rock climbing and caving. All those activities can be undertaken safely if they are properly organised. It would be a shame if our outdoor pursuit centres were unable to survive because local authorities had to take difficult decisions and choose to cut those centres due to economic pressure.

If we are to ensure that people from inner cities visit our rural regions we must consider transport and the way in which rural districts are served by public transport. We must make it much easier for those who want to pursue leisure and recreation activities to take the necessary equipment to the locations. We need to ensure that there are the necessary facilities to carry the equipment such as bicycles and canoes on trains and other forms of public transport. If we do not, the high cost of the limited service available will inhibit people from participating in sporting and recreational activities.

I firmly believe that we must have a commitment to common use and access to common land. Ironically, the Ramblers Association has its headquarters in my constituency at what is probably one of the most heavily congested transport systems, at Vauxhall, which its staff

*[Ms. Hoey]*

overlook. The association has produced a good document this week drawing attention to the fact that in 1976 the Government introduced conditional exemption from inheritance tax, previously known as capital transfer tax and death duty, for land and other property. To be eligible an estate had to be managed in such a way as to benefit the public, including in many cases allowing public access to outstanding areas of countryside. That conditional exemption from inheritance tax was retained in the Inheritance Tax Act 1984.

Both I and the Ramblers Association support the principle of conditional exemption from taxation, but on the basis that there is a real, tangible benefit to the public. That has not been proved to be the case. Those who have studied the matter carefully are not satisfied that the system is working properly. A large number of conditionally exempt transfers have been made, but, with just one or two exceptions, there has been no publicity and the transactions have remained confidential. Public funds have been used to purchase public access to the countryside, but the public have not been told where the land is that they can use.

The landowners who have taken advantage of the conditional exemption have offered very little in return. Indeed, in some cases they have placed restrictions on what was previously on offer. They have offered no new access or rights of way in return for tax exemption. The public should know who those landlords are, what they have been given in tax exemption and what they are giving in return. Otherwise, those landlords will get away with evading tax for no public benefit. As ordinary taxpayers, they would not be allowed to get away with that.

I hope that the secrecy that surrounds the matter will be removed and that it will be brought into the open. Those people are ripping off not just the Government but the public. They are not allowing the public reasonable access to their lands or estates. There must be some quantifiable public gain. I know that this matter will be discussed in the Finance Bill Committee. If the Government are to abolish inheritance tax, how can we ensure that the promised public benefit from those large estates will accrue to the people?

Will the Minister refer to that matter when he replies? Will he try to ensure that all of the Government's policies, plans and actions make generous and positive provision for sport and recreation in the countryside? That is not incompatible with other uses, but it is an important factor which must be considered.

12.2 pm

**Mr. Nigel Waterson** (Eastbourne): I am grateful to be called to make my maiden speech. I am naturally delighted to be in this House, but even more so to be representing Eastbourne. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on introducing this important motion.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on an excellent maiden speech—in so far as I am qualified to judge such a matter. I am pleased to be one of the sponsors of his Bill on hedgerows. It is an important Bill which I hope will have a speedy and painless progress through the House. He and I have shared many years of friendly co-operation in the Bow Group, so I am delighted to make my maiden speech on the same day as he has made his.

Eastbourne's beauty is matched only by its charm. It has been a site of continuous settlement since the iron age and the downs have been a major trading route from time immemorial. In AD 410 Saxon invaders established a base by a stream—or burne—and by the time of the Domesday book the "burne" had turned into "bourne". By 1555, the manor was named East Bourne. In later years, it developed as a prosperous seaside town, especially once it was served by the railway. In those days, sea water bathing was less significant than the drinking of large quantities of sea water, which was thought to have therapeutic value.

A medical gentleman from Lewes prescribed one pint doses from 25 gallons of sea water to be imbibed by anyone seeking the cure. It is, therefore, a mystery to me why the town then developed as a popular seaside resort, but develop it did. For many years its fate has been inextricably linked with successive Dukes of Devonshire. During the second world war it was the most bombed town on the south coast, but it came through that experience with pride and a strong community spirit—qualities which endure today in the town's people.

Eastbourne is well known as a delightful spot for holidaymakers and visitors of all sorts and it was voted top resort in 1990. However, we should not forget that tourism is only part of Eastbourne's local economy. Service industries and light industries are well represented, including various high-tech companies. The pharmaceuticals giant Rhône-Poulenc Rorer recently moved its European headquarters to Eastbourne.

The town is deservedly well known as a popular spot for retirement—about one third of the population are of retirement age—but that is far from being the whole story. The population and the birth rate are both rising rapidly. By the year 2001, the school population will have grown by a staggering 54 per cent., no less than 30 per cent. of the population will be aged 25 to 44, and the proportion of retired people will have fallen to less than a quarter.

There is much work being done, and still to be done, on the local transport infrastructure. Improvements are afoot or being planned to such routes as the A22 and the A27-A259. The rail network also needs to be upgraded if Eastbourne is to reap the benefits of the single European market and the channel tunnel.

The Eastbourne park and Sovereign Harbour developments will improve the already impressive amenities of the town. A significantly upgraded waste water treatment works is planned, albeit its location is currently the subject of some controversy. I am delighted to report that, as of 1 April this year, our excellent local hospitals acquired trust status. I have no doubt that the combination of good management, committed staff and increased funding will raise the standards of our local national health service even higher.

I believe that it is traditional on these occasions to say something about one's predecessors. Since its inception in 1885, the parliamentary constituency of Eastbourne has almost always been represented by a Conservative Member. Currently, the constituency takes in the borough of Eastbourne and the outlying areas of Willingdon and Polegate, both of which retain their own distinctive charm. In 1885, there were a mere 8,504 electors producing, I am pleased to say, a Tory majority of 64. However, there have been two lapses during the century. Between 1906 and

1910 Eastbourne had a Liberal Member. Again, my immediate predecessor, David Bellotti, was a Liberal Democrat. He won a famous by-election in 1990 and held the seat for 17 months. He did his best for the town during what was perforce a temporary tenancy. This House has a special feeling for hon. Members who lose their seats and David Bellotti has all our best wishes in his future career.

I know that David Bellotti and the House will understand if I dwell at greater length on his predecessor, the late Ian Gow. He was elected in February 1974 and served Eastbourne and this House well and faithfully for more than 16 years until he was cruelly cut down in his political prime. It is difficult to convey the depth of affection felt for Ian Gow in Eastbourne. When he was murdered by the IRA in a characteristically cowardly and callous fashion on 30 July 1990, the town lost a true friend. I am especially grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight for his generous remarks. Our thoughts also go out to Ian Gow's loyal widow Jane and their two sons. She has borne her suffering with courage and dignity. I was pleased to be present last Friday at the moving ceremony at which Dame Jane, as she now is, was granted the freedom of the town.

Ian Gow was a popular and effective Member of Parliament. Many hon. Members will remember his outstanding and witty speech on the Loyal Address in 1989. He resigned from Government office on a point of principle, but remained a fierce advocate of what he thought was right and an ardent defender of our parliamentary democracy and its traditions. I know that he is still sorely missed in all parts of the House. Many hon. Members will recall his deft piloting of the Eastbourne Harbour Bill, in the teeth of opposition from some Members led keenly but ultimately unsuccessfully by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) who graced us with his presence earlier.

A few days ago, *The Times* said that Labour was perceived to be in such disarray that on occasions it was difficult to believe that the hon. Member for Bolsover was not the Leader of the Opposition. Be that as it may, the official Opposition continues to drift on, rudderless and leaderless. To borrow an illustration used in a different context recently, one is sometimes led to wonder whether Labour is holed below the water line.

I associate myself with the positive comments about the publication, "Action for the Countryside". It is an imaginative and forward-looking document and I am especially interested in the importance that it attaches to tourism in the countryside. I shall deal with that aspect in the remainder of my speech. I am naturally concerned about tourism, which provides a livelihood for many of my constituents and makes a major contribution to the prosperity of the town as a whole. I was recently privileged to be elected joint secretary of the Conservative Back-Bench tourism committee and, in due course, I shall speak to my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment about the peculiarly disadvantageous way in which the standard spending assessments seem to be calculated in so far as they impact on coastal resort towns such as Eastbourne.

The jewel in the crown of our local scenery is, of course, Beachy Head. It is the highest chalk sea cliff in Britain and forms part of about 4,000 acres of downland purchased by the borough council in the 1920s. It is rightly designated an area of outstanding natural beauty, and much of it is a site of special scientific interest. The chalk grassland is home to some of Britain's richest wildlife. It supports 30 species of plant life, including aromatic herbs and rare orchids, as well as 25 species of butterfly—a subject on which the debate touched earlier. Ground nesting birds such as the skylark and meadow pipit are also found there.

It is hardly surprising that Beachy Head attracts about 1 million visitors a year, and nothing could more graphically illustrate the potential conflict between the growth of tourism and the preservation of our countryside. Our downland is a precious resource and major effects are needed to protect and preserve it. One of the themes that "Action for the Countryside" rightly stresses is that in local areas the best action is that which is taken locally. Therefore, I applaud the recent establishment of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, which is supported by the Countryside Commission, the two county councils and 11 borough and district councils. Recently, the Liberal Democrat-controlled borough council——

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** That will not be for long.

**Mr. Waterson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment.

The council recently granted outline planning permission for redevelopment of the tourist facilities at Beachy Head. That permission was granted in the face of considerable opposition from local residents and groups such as the Society of Sussex Downsmen. I played my part in that campaign. There is considerable scope to reduce the scale of those proposals and I am pleased to say that the developers have already made significant concessions. No one could argue that the current facilities at Beachy Head did not need some upgrading, but perhaps this is a textbook example of how a sensible balance must be struck between the needs of visitors and the imperative need to preserve our national heritage. Hon. Members can readily imagine the erosive effects on this sensitive landscape of 1 million pairs of feet tramping over it each year.

For those reasons I welcome the Government's proposals in "Action for the Countryside". The countryside stewardship scheme is a welcome idea to conserve key landscapes and habitats and enhance public enjoyment of them. The extra funding which has been promised to bring rights of way into good repair is also a bonus. The document is spot on when it states:

"Landscape and nature conservation require positive management as well as protection."

The document is also right to stress that at the same time as removing unnecessary restraints on the tourism market a proper balance must be struck

"between the needs of the industry, its customers, the environment and the communities within which tourism takes place".

I heartily endorse the stress placed on the role of the English tourist board in this endeavour. I look forward to the conference on the theme of tourism and the environment which is to be held later this year to coincide with the United Kingdom's presidency of the European Community. I am sure that the Minister will do all that he can to ensure that Britain gives a lead in this important area.

These are vital issues for me and for my constituents. I hope and expect that the Government will address them with the resources and the political will that they deserve.

12.17 pm

**The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Maclean):** My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) said that this was a good week for him and that he had had considerable good fortune. So have I. This is the third or fourth debate in which I have participated in the past couple of weeks and on each occasion I have had a chance to comment on some excellent maiden speeches. I am delighted to say that today is no exception. It gave me particular pleasure to listen to the speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson).

We all had considerable affection for Sir Geoffrey Howe, who is now in the other place. My hon. Friends would agree that if it had not been for his period of chancellorship we would not have secured victories in 1983 and 1987. He put our economy on a sound footing and grappled with economic problems that had been ducked for about 30 years.

The House likes maiden speakers who follow the tradition of speaking well of their predecessors and affectionately of their constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne spoke in that way about both his predecessors. He spoke courteously about David Bellotti who was in the House for a short time.

The House, and especially Conservative Members, had considerable affection for Ian Gow. I suspect that all hon. Members in the last Parliament who knew Ian could tell some story of how their lives had been made that little bit better because they had met Ian Gow and had learnt something from him or had had their lives enriched, even on a short acquaintanceship, by some of his stories.

My last meeting with Ian Gow was very pleasant and memorable. He gave me a coloured picture of his two terrier dogs. I know that many of my hon. Friends have pictures of Ian in their houses. I have, in a prominent place in mine, that picture of his two dogs. Like me, he was a great dog lover and we exchanged stories of how much our sofas and chairs had been torn apart by our dogs.

I know that it is also traditional to say that I expect to hear from my hon. Friends again, but I am sure that the House will. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East is to introduce a Bill to protect hedgerows and I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne is a sponsor of it. I shall be saying something about it a little later, but I know that the House will hear from my hon. Friends again, not least in the debates on that Bill. Constituents in both those constituencies can be proud that the notable and worthy Members who represented them in the past have been succeeded by equally notable and worthy Members.

I welcome the motion, because the debate gives me the opportunity to set out the Government's view. Of all my myriad responsibilities—I seem to discover a new one every day in my new job—that for the English countryside I consider among the most important. To look after our countryside and to make sure that the people in it are looked after, that it develops and thrives and at the same time protects its wildlife, is an onerous responsibility. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight tabled the motion and gave us the opportunity to debate this important subject.

At the start of my hon. Friend's speech, it seemed as though he, too, was making a traditional maiden speech because of the obvious affection that he has for his constituency and the elegant way in which he spoke of all its aspects. It is also traditional that, when Ministers are bounced at the Dispatch Box by an hon. Member urging us to visit his constituency, we have a good excuse for refusing—that is, if our civil servants have handed us such an excuse. I want to reverse that tradition. My hon. Friend did not ask me to visit his constituency, but he described it so pleasantly and elegantly that I am minded to visit it, and I hope that he will ask me to do so.

**Mr. Barry Field:** I am remiss. It is probably the first time that I have made a speech and not asked the Minister to visit. However, I know that my hon. Friend not only shares with me a love of dogs and the countryside but has, in private conversation, said that he hoped soon to visit the Isle of Wight and see its beauty for himself.

**Mr. Maclean:** I certainly intend to do that as soon as I can, or perhaps in the best possible season so that I can see the Isle of Wight in all its beauty.

My hon. Friend spoke about "Action for the Countryside" which is a major policy document. It includes a £45 million package of new, improved and extended initiatives to promote rural development, to conserve and enhance landscapes and wildlife, and to promote access to, and public appreciation of, the countryside.

At the heart of our policies for the countryside lies a concern to achieve a successful marriage between the development of the rural economy and the protection of the countryside environment. The Government want to see a thriving countryside, based on a sensible balance between conservation and encouraging the development necessary to sustain rural communities.

A diverse, healthy rural economy will not only secure the prosperity of all those who live in the countryside, but is an essential safeguard for the rural environment. The principal guardians of our countryside are those who live and work there and only when country people share in the growth of prosperity to which we are committed for the country as a whole, can we be sure that development and conservation will go hand in hand. Because we need to provide investment and other resources to maintain the environment, a prosperous rural economy must be the best guarantee that the countryside will be properly tended and in good heart. We therefore see no conflict between promoting measures to stimulate jobs, housing and services in rural areas and strengthening the protection of those qualities of the countryside that we all value so much.

Those who believe that we can protect the countryside by turning it into a rural theme park are wrong. The countryside is changing. Too many people are unaware of these facts or choose to ignore them. They still want to believe in a chocolate box image of the village with its thatched cottages, pub and smithy, populated by yokels dozing in the sunshine. For an increasing number of our villages, it is as likely that the thatched cottage will house an information technology system analyst working from home, that the pub will cater mainly for evening and weekend trade from the nearest town and that the smithy specialises in fancy wrought iron gates for commuters.

To hope that everyone will welcome change may be over-optimistic, but the least sensible approach is to ignore change in the unlikely hope that it will somehow go away. A changing countryside produces changing needs and the

Government will ensure that our policies for the countryside fully meet those needs. "Action for the Countryside" demonstrates how we are doing so. As my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East said, the countryside is not a museum. I hope that his presence this afternoon at the renovated barns and cowsheds will encourage others to redevelop their old farm buildings, provided that this is done in a way that is sympathetic to the needs of the countryside.

The Government have emphasised their commitment to the environment. We have set out our policies fully and clearly. Our 1990 White Paper "This Common Inheritance" laid down principles which we intended should apply to all our environmental policies. We reaffirmed those policies in "The First Year Report" published last September while incorporating fresh initiatives mounted in response to new information. I am confident that when we publish our second annual progress report later this year the principles will be seen still to be relevant and that we shall demonstrate the further progress we have made.

The White Paper principles are, first, that we must base our policies on fact not fantasy and use the best evidence and analysis available; secondly, that given the environmental risks, we must act reasonably and be prepared to take precautionary action where it is justified; thirdly, that we must inform public debate and public concern by ensuring publication of the facts; fourthly, that we must work for progress just as hard in the international arena as we do at home; and fifthly, that we must take care to choose the best instruments to achieve our environmental goals. Chapters 6 and 7 of "This Common Inheritance" illustrated how we intend to apply those principles to the Government's policies for the countryside. It demonstrated how existing initiatives delivered these principles and made a number of new proposals for action. "The First Year Report" set out the progress made and emphasised the Government's continuing commitment to keep their policies under review. "Action for the Countryside" demonstrates the strength of that commitment to positive action.

As for Labour, I look forward to hearing the contribution of its Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths). It appears that the Labour party has no strategy for agriculture or the countryside. Indeed, an agriculture spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), said,

"and we won't have until after the general election."

That was said in June 1990. Some time has passed since the general election and I hope that today we shall hear announced Labour's policy or strategy for the countryside.

**Mr. Dalyell:** What is the Government's strategy for Mar Lodge?

**Mr. Maclean:** I have several points to make in response to the hon. Gentleman's speech, but they are quite a way into my speech. I assure him that I shall not miss them out.

The Labour party has, of course, some familiar strategies, usually more bureaucracy and controls. Its solution for any problem, from inner-city deprivation to space travel—I have examined their policy documents—is to say that it will introduce an independent commission of experts. It seems that it will introduce one

"to ensure that agricultural practices reflect nutrition."

That comes from "Opportunity Britain". In addition, farmers would presumably have to qualify for Labour's system of green premiums for farming in an environmentally sound manner. That is a system about which Labour avoids giving any details or making any attempt to cost.

I remember Labour's other proposals. It said that farmers who wished to carry out substantial agricultural practices had to consult gay and lesbian committees. I should like to know whether that proposal is still part of Labour party policy or whether it has been dropped.

The fact is that Labour has always been an entirely urban party. It has no coherent policy on agriculture or the countryside. If it has one, I look forward to hearing it today.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** The Minister finally provoked me by making a massive factual error. I think of the number of parliamentary seats in Wales that are held by the Labour party, and even more of those that have been held in the more recent past, which are virtually entirely rural.

**Mr. Maclean:** The hon. Gentleman takes one example from Wales. I invite him to consider the countryside generally. There are 651 Members of this place and, even if we take the seats to which he has referred—constituencies in rural areas that are held by the Labour party—it is disappointing that agriculture does not feature strongly in Labour party annual conference debates. The Opposition have used none of their Supply days in past years to talk about agriculture and the rural economy. I believe that I am right in saying that the Leader of the Opposition has never taken any opportunity to make any pronouncements on agriculture—a vital industry—or on the countryside, which covers 97 per cent. of the country's land mass. However, I shall not provoke the hon. Gentleman further. I hope that he did not mind my provoking him in the nicest possible way.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** If my hon. Friend is to be as gallant as that, I am not. I want to underline what he says about the Labour party's lack of appeal to, and lack of interest in, rural areas. Virtually no seat in England with a significant rural population is represented by a Labour Member. Most of the rural constituencies that Labour Members represented throughout the 1950s now have Conservative Members with substantial majorities. Even in Wales the Labour party has been sent packing from plenty of rural seats that were represented by Labour Members for the same good reason as in England.

**Mr. Maclean:** My hon. Friend made several valid points in his characteristically robust style.

I welcome the motion's specific recognition of some of the most important elements of "Action for the Countryside"—in particular, the extension of the countryside stewardship scheme, the parish paths partnership, rural action and the new hedgerow incentives scheme. But, important though these four initiatives are, they must be seen in the context of the package as a whole. In particular, I should like to draw the House's attention to the range of measures we are taking to stimulate the rural economy, to protect landscape and wildlife and to promote access to, and public appreciation of, the countryside.

The healthy and thriving rural economy that we want can be sustained only if communities have access to job opportunities and the necessary range of services and

*[Mr. Maclean]*

facilities. The Rural Development Commission—RDC—is our main agency in this. It provides workspace directly or in partnership with local authorities and the private sector, grants for the conversion of redundant buildings, and technical and financial advice to small rural businesses.

Increasingly and with our encouragement, the RDC is targeting its activities on the areas with the greatest needs. It has, for example, been tackling the problems of the rural coalfields of the east midlands as well as those of remote areas such as west Cumbria and west Cornwall. It recently relaunched its ACCORD—assistance for co-ordinated rural development—scheme to provide finance for large commercial ventures in rural areas, which would not otherwise proceed.

The Rural Development Commission's countryside employment programme, which we announced recently, provides additional resources to boost the rural economy. A series of pilot projects will see the RDC form partnerships with other statutory and voluntary bodies to formulate programmes of economic, social and environmental action to diversify the local economy and to strengthen local communities. We asked the RDC to monitor the pilots carefully and we will decide in the light of progress whether to launch a wider scheme.

A revised and extended version of the commission's redundant building grant scheme has also been approved. The existing scheme has already created 10,500 job opportunities in rural areas at the reasonable cost of less than £1,300 per job. New features added to the scheme include making grants available in areas of demonstrable economic need and within national parks—even where they lie outside rural development areas—extending the scheme to the provision of high-quality overnight accommodation for tourists and providing higher grant rates where they may be justified to fund the conversion of larger buildings, such as mills.

We recognise that a living and working countryside can be sustained only when people there have access to a reasonable range of services and facilities. The Government have, therefore, approved the expansion of the RDC's social programmes to provide for an increase in expenditure from £5·5 million this year to £7·7 million in 1994-95.

We are providing resources to enable the Housing Corporation to boost its special rural programme, targeted to boost the supply of low-cost housing in the smallest villages. The corporation's programme covers settlements with a population of up to 3,000, but in addition we have made available this year to rural local authorities credit approvals worth £50 million specifically aimed at the provision of low-cost housing, with a further £30 million next year. That will complement the Housing Corporation's programme.

A planning framework for the provision of affordable housing in rural areas is also important. We advise all local planning authorities that the need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration, and that they may negotiate with developers for the provision of an element of affordable housing on new sites to meet local needs.

However, there are also particular difficulties in securing an adequate supply of affordable housing in rural areas where an adequate supply is sometimes needed to secure the viability of local communities. We have, therefore, advised planning authorities in rural areas that they may exceptionally grant planning permission for affordable housing on sites not allocated for housing in the development plan and on which general housing would not normally be allowed, if there is an overriding need. That so-called "exceptions" policy does not override green belt policy; nor does it mean that planning authorities can ignore normal design considerations. Affordable housing should not be shoddy housing. Instead, it represents a small but significant initiative to provide housing for young people growing up in rural communities.

I have noted the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight about creeping housing development by stealth—he gave the example of the old caravan parked in the middle of the field. Our insistence on district plans being provided by the district councils by 1996 should effectively deal with such problems. I will mention that again later in my speech.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** The initiatives that my hon. Friend announced are very welcome—particularly the emphasis on afforable housing, for which a number of my hon. Friends and, indeed, hon. Members in all parts of the House have pressed. Does he acknowledge the importance of ensuring that exceptional affordable housing, which can bypass normal planning arrangements, is sympathetically designed? It should have regard to the size of rooms and to the size of the houses themselves. If new homes are to be built in villages, should they not be on the same scale as, say, 400-year-old cottages there, and not always adhere to present-day Parker Morris standards?

**Mr. Maclean:** I have considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend's point. The book published by HRH the Prince of Wales on architecture in Britain gives examples of public buildings and private dwellings that are sympathetic to the existing surroundings. One can have infill in villages and houses built on the edges of villages and even in national parks, provided that the right materials, designs and sizes are chosen. In that way, one can actually enhance the countryside. But no matter how ideal the site, an inappropriately designed house built of the wrong materials is an eyesore and a disgrace to the countryside.

The Government consider it equally important to protect and enhance the landscape and to conserve the abundance, variety and regional distribution of its wildlife and wealth of importance features of geology and landform. In England our finest landscapes are designated as national parks by the Countryside Commission and confirmed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. In January, we published our positive response to the national parks review panel indicating our intention to bring the purposes of the parks up to date, strengthen the planning protection afforded to them and make all national park authorities independent boards—thereby better fitting them to carry out their tasks into the next century. We also announced our intention to give the New forest a statutory status which will afford it as great a level of protection as any national park.

Although parliamentary time has not been found for national parks legislation during this Session. I reaffirm in the strongest terms the Government's commitment to the parks and our intention to introduce our proposed

measures as soon as possible. We are working with the park authorities and others to ensure that we are ready to bring forward that essential measure at the earliest opportunity.

Protection of the landscape is vital, but we recognise that we need also to provide the means to encourage the management of land in the most environmentally responsible manner.

**Mr. Barry Field:** The Isle of Wight considered making an application to become a national park, but it was put off the idea because it would have meant that the island had to surrender all its planning powers to the commission. That matter is of considerable concern to the local community, who do not want to lose their democratic control over planning matters.

**Mr. Maclean:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. When we introduce the new national parks legislation to which we are committed, we will not deal with the New forest, for example, in the same way as we would under the existing legislation. In the case of the New forest, we accepted all the local advice that the existing machinery and committees should be maintained. Theoretically, it would be possible for the Isle of Wight—if the commission recommended that it become a national park—to ensure that its planning functions were dealt with by XYZ means. it would not automatically have to follow the model of existing national parks.

If, in due course, the Countryside Commission recommends other areas as national parks, I should be very interested in principle to learn of the commission's guidance on how the parks ought to be governed and planning issues should be dealt with.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Some of us are very concerned that there are no national parks in Northern Ireland. The mountains of Mourne and the Fermanagh lake district are surely prime candidates. Furthermore, in rural Northern Ireland there is still a presumption in favour of development, not against it, which leads to bungalow mania throughout parts of the Province. Bearing in mind that this is a United Kingdom debate, not an English debate, I hope that my hon. Friend will address those issues, or at least discuss them with his ministerial colleagues after the debate.

**Mr. Maclean:** I can give my hon. Friend one assurance which he seeks. I shall not address those issues directly, except to say that in all my visits to Northern Ireland I have regarded the whole Province as one beautiful national park—but I shall certainly draw the attention of my colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office to what my hon. Friend has said, and no doubt they will correspond with him.

The countryside stewardship scheme identifies environmental features which are of the highest priority in terms of their landscape, wildlife and historic value, and offers incentives to landowners and managers to maintain those features. Although the scheme has been in operation for only a year, already about 900 agreements have been made covering about 30,000 hectares of land—I do not know what size that is in real acreages. We especially welcome the fact that nearly a quarter of that land involves new provision for public access.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made a characteristically good and interesting speech, and I must tell him that the £2·9 million to which he referred represents merely the additional new resources that we are putting into the Countryside Commission for the countryside stewardship scheme. Of course, £25 million has also been allocated for the stewardship scheme over the next three years—and that is only the Countryside Commission's share. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food runs similar schemes—for example, those involving environmentally sensitive areas, which do very similar things. I believe that the funding there has increased to £55 million.

We were enthusiastic about the modest expansion now proposed by the Countryside Commission, to add historic landscapes and meadow and pasture to the original prescriptions of chalk and limestone grassland, waterside landscapes, the uplands, lowland heath and the coast. Additional resources for that expansion have been provided, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will launch the extended scheme early next week.

The proposed hedgerow incentive scheme addresses an especially important issue about which I know there is public concern, shared by many in the House. Our countryside survey 1990 showed that a substantial number of hedgerows were being lost through lack of management. The new scheme, which I hope to launch next month, will counter this problem and encourage farmers and landowners to manage their hedgerows in ways that will ensure their long-term survival. The scheme will be administered by the Countryside Commission in close co-ordination with existing MAFF grants and payments will be made for a range of environmentally beneficial works such as laying and gapping up. Hedgerows are a key element of our landscape and the scheme will target hedgerows of particular historic, landscape or wildlife importance.

The Government also recognise that hedgerows are being lost through removal, and I know that there has been much disappointment that, owing to pressure on the parliamentary timetable, we have not been able to promise the introduction of our proposed Bill on hedgerow notification during this Session. However, we have noted with considerable interest the declared intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East to take the opportunity of his good fortune in the ballot for private Members' Bill to introduce a measure with similar objectives. I assure him and the House that the Government welcome his intention, and will afford him every support.

We have also taken steps to secure the further protection of wildlife. English Nature is our agency in England for nature conservation. With the Joint Nature Conservation Committee it advises the Government on all aspects of nature conservation. It establishes and maintains nature reserves and identifies and conserves sites of special scientific interest.

We have welcomed and approved proposals by English Nature to secure better management of sites of special scientific interest. The new wildlife enhancement scheme will secure valuable benefits for conservation through paying owners of SSSIs for positive management schemes, while the species recovery programme will improve the status of particular endangered species. Both schemes will work in tandem with countryside stewardship and with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's expanding programme of environmentally sensitive areas.

*[Mr. Maclean]*

The Government played an active and constructive role to secure the European Community habitats directive which aims to conserve wildlife diversity throughout the Community. Central to the objectives of the directive will be the establishment of a network of protected sites, known as Natura 2000. The network will be made up of special areas of conservation, comprising rare and endangered wildlife habitats and flora and fauna types of Community importance. We are well placed to respond to the directive through our existing statutory framework and conservation programmes, but we are considering what more would be appropriate for us to do fully to meet our obligations.

**Mr. Dalyell:** What was said about Natura 2000 at Rio? On the face of it, it seems to me to fit in with some of the directives that were asked for at Rio.

**Mr. Maclean:** If I remember rightly, it was perceived that it would fit in extremely well with the convention that was signed at Rio and that, therefore, there was no need to discuss it. Natura 2000 is up and running. There is no disagreement on it. We all think that it is excellent. It is just one other piece of the jigsaw that we have to fit in.

On the question of access and enjoyment of the countryside, the Government's commitment to the protection of the countryside is matched by our recognition of the need to provide for its appropriate enjoyment. The English countryside has long been a source of spiritual as well as active recreation and its value to those who live in our towns and cities is well proven. We want to improve the quality of that experience for visitors, but not at the expense of those who live in the country.

I was much taken by the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. He drew what I believe to be a correct distinction between the view of the countryside and the view from the countryside. I shall probably pinch those two phrases for my own use, which is not unusual in politics. The phraseology that I have used constantly is how to reconcile the different views and needs of those who live in the countryside with those who earn a living from the countryside. His views and mine are compatible. One of the biggest problems that we shall have to face in the remainder of this decade is the reconciliation of those two points of view.

Recent years have seen the development of new recreational pursuits which are drawn to the open spaces of the countryside, not all of which are compatible with the concept of quiet enjoyment. Some, such as motorised sports, are, frankly, inappropriate in many rural areas. Although other sports may not offend the ear, they draw large numbers of people to participate, or as spectators. Therefore, they can be just as great a source of disturbance. Our recent planning policy guidance note on sport and recreation emphasised the need to protect sensitive rural areas from inappropriate recreational development.

I sympathise with the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight regarding new forms of motorised traffic on byways open to all traffic. As he says, that was never their original purpose. I know that his concern over vehicular rights on rights of way are shared by other hon. Members. My hon. Friend referred to the rights of way review committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst). He was, however, slightly incorrect, in that its remit does not run to this matter. However, a sub-committee of the review committee is looking at the problem. I await its recommendations with considerable interest. This is a complex issue. I recognise that we must look closely and urgently at what the rights of way review committee proposes. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that I understand that the highways authority of the Isle of Wight council has the power, through traffic regulation orders, to restrict inappropriate or damaging use. Furthermore, vehicular use of byways is illegal and highway authorities should take action against any misuse. I am concerned about the matter. Someone should do something, and I shall look into it.

We have become much more aware in recent years of the possible conflict between recreation and conservation. For that reason, last year we took steps to withdraw certain permitted development rights—for example, for some motor sport events or for war gaming—in sites of special scientific interest. We have recently reconfirmed our view that where there is conflict between the conservation and recreation objectives in the national parks, the former must take precedence. We shall need to look carefully at our obligations under the EC habitats directive and ensure that our most valuable habitats can be properly protected from potentially damaging recreational uses.

Let me make it clear, however, that the Government accept that the countryside can play an important role in suitable recreational provision. I recognise that provision for recreation has become an important factor in the diversification of our rural economy. We welcome that and we want to encourage it, but the provision for recreation has to be for appropriate pursuits, carried on in the right place and under the right conditions. The activities carried out must cause no harm to the countryside. Indeed, I would go further and say that not only should they cause no harm but they should be compatible with the ethos of the countryside and all that it stands for.

Walking remains the most popular form of rural recreation. Our extensive network of 120,000 miles of public rights of way in England is a unique legacy of the past which provides a present means of enjoying the huge variety of our landscape and the settlements within it. "This Common Inheritance" gave the Government's endorsement to the commission's target to bring the rights of way network into good order by the end of the century. Ensuring that all rights of way are open for use, well maintained and properly signposted will allow for access without damaging other interests, including those of the landowner and villager.

We have previously said that an important element in the additional resources that we have provided for the Countryside Commission in the past two years should be directed towards the target for the rights of way network. We recognise that that is a difficult task which will require the effort of all those involved, including the Government. To this end, we gave full support to the Rights of Way Act 1990, which was steered so capably through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). It clarified and strengthened the law on the restoration of public paths after ploughing.

We have also welcomed the commission's new parish paths partnership, which aims to stimulate local improvement schemes through parish councils and other

local groups. The new scheme will capitalise on local interest, experience and knowledge. It will help to use to better effect the resources already available to improve rights of way and will free highway authorities to concentrate on their statutory responsibilities. We have made £900,000 available during the current year and the commission has already announced the first 15 highway authorities which have been invited to participate. It is hoped that the scheme will operate on a national basis within three years. I shall draw to the attention of the Countryside Commission the problems identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight of completing the coastal path round the island.

We are encouraging landowners to provide access off rights of way by agreement. I have mentioned the success of countryside stewardship in providing such access. We are clear, however, that a right of general access to open land, as some have demanded, would not be appropriate in this small and crowded island. I have no doubt that it would multiply and exacerbate disputes. The key to minimising conflict between landowners and walkers must be careful management. Anyone who saw BBC breakfast television this morning would have been appalled at the damage that we are facing on some of our rights of way, particularly on the peak lands in the Pennines crossed by the Pennine way.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) referred to tank training on Luneburg heath. I have seen a few tank training grounds in my time. They were paradise compared with parts of the Pennine Way, which have been widened in places to something resembling a knee-deep in mud 14-lane motorway.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne expressed concern about Beachy Head. We must try to ensure that all of our best landscapes and prime sites do not suffer undue damage because of demands for ever more access.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** I agree with everything that the Minister said about the need for the rights of owners to privacy on their land to be balanced against properly signed footpaths and access ways. Will he bear in mind the grave concern now felt in some parts of the country about hippy convoys and festivals? Will he also bear in mind the extreme difficulty which even local authorities face in excluding those dreadful and intrusive louts from privately owned land?

**Mr. Maclean:** I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that I take that on board, and I will draw his remarks to the attention of the Home Secretary, who I know is also concerned about that. Hon. Members have sympathy for the genuine homeless and genuine gipsies, if there are any left nowadays, but there is no sympathy for people who could do better and who have places to live but who decide to wander the countryside in a hippy convoy and crowd on to someone's land.

There may be the impression in some parts of the House that they are moving on to the land of multi-billionaire landlords. That is not so. Would that there were more billionaire landlords, for they would solve the Mar Lodge problem about which the hon. Member for Linlithgow spoke.

Growing pressures on the countryside from urban visitors are probably inevitable, but we must recognise that the capacity of the countryside is limited and that the demands of visitors must be weighed against the proper needs of those who own and work the land. Those who come to enjoy the countryside must recognise that their playground is another's workplace.

Indeed, I do not like the term "enjoy the countryside." The countryside is there to be appreciated on its terms, not on ours. If we appreciate its wonders—its wealth of wildlife, the miracle of the seasons, the abundance of wild and farmed food it produces, the majesty of its mountains, the joy of its rivers and streams, the peace and quiet of its woods and valleys and even the blackness of its nights—and simultaneously get enjoyment from that appreciation, that is an added bonus, but it is not the purpose of the countryside to give us enjoyment.

Our countryside is not a museum or a giant green Alton Towers or sports stadium to be used for our titillation. If we cannot accept its needs, its constraints and its demands, we should scurry back to our cities and leave it alone. Just as agriculture is now beginning to come back into harmony with nature, as it was for centuries, so the rest of us will have to adapt our lifestyles to live in harmony with the countryside, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow said. I would go so far as to say that even if there were no human beings on earth, I would still defend the right of the countryside to exist for its own sake.

We hear much clamour for rights; I should like to see greater recognition of responsibilities. The countryside we value today has been created by generations of responsible stewardship. Those who come to enjoy the countryside must behave with respect for the benefits of that stewardship to ensure its survival.

A key to the success of all our initiatives will be mobilising local resources and local action. That theme runs through our booklet, "Action for the Countryside." We have a fine tradition of voluntary bodies which play a vital part in helping to protect wildlife, in carrying out practical conservation work and in managing land in an environmentally sensitive way. We support those bodies and shall continue to encourage their growth and effectiveness.

Safeguarding the local character of an area is best tackled at the local level. Parish councils and the wealth of voluntary groups have the initiative which can help to build community spirit and make their area more attractive for new business enterprise as well as achieving environmental improvements for their own sake.

The commitment to local action is at the core of the new rural action initiative. This scheme, proposed jointly by the RDC, English Nature and the Countryside Commission, in partnership with Action with Communities in Rural England, ACRE, and other bodies such as the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, will offer financial assistance, advice and training to the best schemes of local environmental improvement selected in any area. Grants will be provided of up to £2,000 per project and we have made £800,000 available for the first year of the scheme.

There are, of course, wider issues in the countryside which the Government are actively seeking to resolve. Not least of those is the reform of the common agricultural policy and the impact that that will have on the future of farming. Farming makes use of about 73 per cent. of the land surface in England and much of our most valued landscape has been shaped by farmers who for generations have worked the land. However, farming has changed as rapidly as many of the newer, high-technology industries.

*[Mr. Maclean]*

Technical advance, be it through new techniques, new crops or new strains of livestock, has successfully expanded production to the point where we are now able to re-order our priorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) highlighted the problems in agriculture and pointed the way in which farming could proceed by developing and marketing more novel crops. The farmer's role in caring for the countryside has become much more important to a more prosperous society less concerned with food shortages. But there need be no conflict between the production of food and the conservation of the countryside. Environmentally sensitive farming has always been concerned to sustain the resources of the natural environment for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

The recent agreement secured in Brussels has made significant progress towards ensuring that agricultural markets are more responsive to changing consumer needs, that the environment is maintained and enhanced, and that a balance is kept between providing a fair standard of living for agricultural communities and affordable food for consumers. We especially welcome the agri-environment measure, which means that all member states will now operate programmes to encourage environmentally sensitive farming. The United Kingdom was successful in getting a statement into the agreement affirming the Commission's commitment to making environmental protection an integral part of the CAP. We will be pressing during our forthcoming presidency for direct payments to be dependent on the observance of environmental conditions.

We have been especially pleased at the way in which other Community states have begun to adopt the approach pioneered by the United Kingdom through the concept of environmentally sensitive areas. ESAs set out to encourage farming systems and farming practices which are especially beneficial in areas of landscape or wildlife value. They are welcomed both by farmers and environmentalists. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently announced extensions to the ESA scheme which will add a further 12 areas in England and which will, with additions to existing areas, bring the total area covered by the scheme to more than 1 million hectares, and bring considerable new financial resources into the countryside.

Forestry is another vital element in the rural economy. Forests and woodlands cover only 10 per cent. of Britain's land surface, compared with an average 25 per cent. in the European Community, and there is clearly scope to increase our level of tree cover for both environmental and economic reasons. At the same time, we need to protect our remaining ancient and semi-natural woodlands for their beauty and wildlife value. The Government remain determined to ensure that forestry plays a fuller part in the future of the countryside, not just for its economic worth in terms of timber production, but for its social and environmental values. I shall discuss all the issues that the hon. Member for Linlithgow raised on Mar Lodge with my hon. Friends in the Scottish Office.

It was because the Government wanted to encourage timber production for social and environmental value that they issued guidance to local authorities throughout England and Wales on the preparation of indicative forestry strategies, which had already proved their value in Scotland. That is a case where we have learnt from north of the border. The aim of the new strategies will be to indicate the opportunities for creating new woodlands and forests, while taking particular account of areas sensitive to tree planting.

In order to encourage planting on a wider scale to meet both economic and environmental objectives, the Government have introduced substantial changes to their support for forestry. The farm woodland premium scheme, introduced on 1 April, offers improved financial incentives for encouraging farmers to convert land in agricultural use to woodland with the aim of improving the farmed landscape and environment, and encouraging a productive land use alternative to agriculture.

The woodland grant scheme is now targeted towards increasing amounts of broadleaf and mixed planting, with a shift towards better-quality land in the lowlands encouraged by the better land supplement. The introduction this April of management grants under the scheme will ensure that grant support is now available beyond the planting and establishment phase, particularly in the case of woodlands of special environmental value.

In the particular context of encouraging multi-purpose forestry, we have announced our support for proposals to create a new national forest in the midlands and to develop community forests near major towns and cities. The new national forest, as proposed by the Countryside Commission and supported by the Forestry Commission, covers an area of 50,000 hectares in Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and that exciting concept promises a modern counterpart of the New forest in Hampshire which was established in Norman times. The Government have funded the establishment of a project team and are now awaiting its proposed forest strategy and business plan as a basis for future decisions on the forest.

Twelve community forests are currently planned—in Staffordshire, Tyne and Wear, east London, Bedford, Bristol, Cleveland, Manchester, Merseyside, Nottingham, south Hertfordshire, south Yorkshire and Swindon. Each forest will each cover an area of 8,000 to 20,000 hectares and special emphasis will be placed on enhancing the environment of the urban fringe and providing new opportunities for leisure close to major conurbations. Local support and commitment will be crucial to the success of the community forests, but the Government believe that the Forestry Commission's introduction of a new community woodland supplement will be especially helpful in creating the right conditions for their development.

All those initiatives may be placed within the framework of the Government's objectives to achieve the proper balance between a thriving rural economy and conservation of the countryside environment. The planning system lies at the heart of that aim of integrating the development necessary to sustain the rural economy and communities with protection of the countryside for the sake of its beauty, the diversity of its landscape and the wealth and value of natural and historical resources.

New guidance for local planning authorities on the countryside and the rural economy is contained in planning policy guidance note 7 which my Department issued in January. The PPG7 recognises the substantial changes that are taking place in the countryside and

emphasises the importance that the Government place on sustaining the process of rural diversification and accommodating change, while conserving the full and varied countryside for the benefit of residents and visitors alike. The PPG7 should reduce the abuse of the agricultural dwellings concession, which worried my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight. Rural areas can accommodate many forms of development without detriment, if location and design are handled with sensitivity. Such sensitivity means relating new development to the existing form, character and pattern of settlements and having due regard to the distribution of historic, wildlife and landscape resources and the quality of the land. Special care is needed to protect our remaining landscape features and wildlife habitats, replacement of which is rarely possible and usually expensive. In the open countryside, development needs to be strictly controlled. In designated areas, such as national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest, still greater restraint is appropriate.

The new guidance recognises that a shift in emphasis is necessary—away from retaining as much agricultural land as possible in production towards protecting our wildlife habitats and landscape features and developing the rural economy. We must of course continue to protect the best of our agricultural land, but for land of lower quality protecting landscape and wildlife interests will need to be given more weight.

Opportunities exist for land to move from agricultural use to forestry, leisure and other developments and to uses that will be focused on environmental benefit. The guidance restates and clarifies advice on housing in the countryside, on the reuse and adaptation of rural buildings and on the operation of new controls over the development, extension and alteration of farm buildings and the construction of farm and forestry roads.

The Government firmly believe that we now have the right planning guidance for our rural areas, which strikes an appropriate balance between development opportunities and the need for conservation in all its forms. We now look to local planning authorities to implement that guidance in their development plans and day-to-day planning decisions.

I noted the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight about the Glanville fritillary. I shall pass on his comments to our colleagues in English Nature.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked me about Rio. This debate is intended to be more about the countryside and all the matters that I have already discussed. The hon. Gentleman asked me many questions, and in particular about the Darwin initiative. Some of those points were also raised in yesterday's debate. The hon. Gentleman's questions deserve proper consideration and I assure him that I will write to him in detail on all his points, including the one about regional networks. They are intended as an aid to building up capacity in developing countries by improving links between centres of expertise. The whole objective of the Darwin initiative is to support the implementation of the biodiversity convention by deploying the strengths of the United Kingdom in assisting the conservation and sustainable use of the world's resources of biodiversity and natural habitats.

I shall list five things that the initiative will assist—the five golden rules. First, it will assist in carrying out preliminary country studies of natural resources and biodiversity in other countries and helping, where appropriate, in the preparation of the conservation and development strategies required by the convention. Secondly, it will assist in clarifying goals for scientific, economic and legal research and in monitoring the development of inventories of the most important species and habitats.

Thirdly, the initiative will help to promote international co-operation on technology and techniques for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, as specified by the convention. Fourthly, it will promote benefit-sharing arrangements between countries that provide biological resources and those who exploit them commercially. Fifthly, it will assist in capacity building in other countries and in the United Kingdom through training and exchange programmes.

The hon. Gentleman asked who would be involved in all of that——

**Mr. Bellingham:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should like your advice and guidance on the clock—which cannot be right, because it shows that my hon. Friend the Minister has been speaking for an hour. He has been speaking so fluently and so brillantly that it seems more like a quarter of an hour.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** The length of speeches, except in clearly defined circumstances —which do not apply now—is not a matter for the Chair.

**Mr. Maclean:** My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) made a good and eloquent point in his customary courteous manner. I was about to conclude my remarks on biodiversity in answer to points raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. All of his speech was relevant to the debate and he was, as usual, very well informed. I wanted to give as full a reply as I could. I need just a couple more minutes.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Neither Kew nor the royal botanic gardens in Edinburgh, when I rang them this morning, knew whether they were dealing with £5 million or £2 million. Can they be enlightened on the crucial question of costs?

**Mr. Maclean:** Not at this moment. We are considering the administration of the Darwin initiative, who will be involved and what it will entail. It is too early to predict what financial resources will be available. We can capitalise on the tremendous amount of work that has already been done. We want to involve all the organisations working in this field which think that they have something to contribute. That includes public and private research institutes, museums and non-government organisations.

Where do we go from Rio? The Government will establish a small action team from the relevant Departments to develop the framework for the initiative. Interested organisations in the private and public sector will be invited to join the appropriate organisational structures further to develop the Darwin initiative. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman supplying all the details that he requested.

"Action for the Countryside" is a comprehensive package of policies aimed specifically at the changing needs of our rural areas. It addresses the most significant current issues in an effective way, but it cannot be the last word. We shall continue to monitor changes and will ensure that our policies are kept up to date.

*[Mr. Maclean]*

The four key themes that run throughout "Action for the Countryside" must remain the core of our countryside policies. these themes are, first, to take a balanced approach; secondly, to target resources on areas of greatest need; thirdly, to remember the key role of the rural economy in creating both a wealthy and a healthy countryside; and finally, to build on the skills and resources of all those who live and work in the countryside. All four are important, but perhaps the most vital is the maximum use that we must make of the skills, enthusiasm and good will of country people. They are in the best position to decide what needs to be done and how to deliver the necessary action most effectively. They are the key to the future of our countryside.

I shall conclude by pinching a quote from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight. It was said by Lord Shuttleworth and deserves repetition. He said:

"one prospect that I cannot accept is the abandonment of a long-standing tradition of a countryside that works in every sense. To settle for a passive countryside, used only like a carpet on the floor, or a painting on the wall, would be to fail to realise the potential of a national resource. Rural England"—

I say rural Britain—

"requires a broadly based economic and social vitality of its own."

I agree, and commend my hon. Friend's motion to the House.

1.21 pm

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): I thank the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) for introducing the debate. I am pleased to take part in it. The hon. Gentleman was motivated by obvious pressures and difficulties faced by the Isle of Wight because it is such a beautiful and popular place. It was pleasant and refreshing to listen to the maiden speech of the hon. Members for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson). Both speeches were exceedingly clear and both hon. Members paid tribute to outstanding predecessors, although the Eastbourne constituency is slightly different from that of Surrey, East in view of the interregnum, so to speak, of the Liberal Member David Bellotti. Both hon. Members appeared extremely confident, but they must have addressed the House with a certain amount of trepidation. I am sure that they will strive to walk in the footsteps of the great people who went before them.

We have been challenged about our concerns for rural areas. Apart from my four years as a student in Cardiff and the weekly sojourn that I have to undertake in London, I have always lived within a short stone's throw of the countryside. As a child, I was fortunate enough to spend holidays on the farm of an uncle and aunt. I remember the times I spent there as very happy. I therefore assure all hon. Members that the countryside and the rural economy are concerns which I keep close to my heart. Where I currently live, in the village of Cefn Cribwr, my back garden runs into a field although—I shall refer to this later—the next field contains a recently closed opencast mine on which we are awaiting the inspector's report on a public inquiry into whether it should be extended further down the valley.

The debate has been extremely interesting and enlivened by contributions from both sides of the House sharing a real concern for the future of the countryside and the balance, to which all referred, between the need for a thriving rural economy and the need to conserve the best features of the countryside. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) managed, with characteristic ease, to relate the countryside in Britain to that of the whole world and the recent Rio conference. I am particularly pleased that the Minister promised to have consultations and correspondence with the Scottish Office about the future of Mar Lodge and the important Caledonian forest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) spoke of the important issue of recreation in the countryside, which again involves the great difficulty, referred to by the Minister and the hon. Member for Eastbourne, when he spoke about tourism, of striking the right balance between interests. In many areas, an imbalance has been caused by the large numbers of people who want to enjoy and appreciate the countryside, because such large-scale access causes damage.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), in welcoming tourists, was concerned about housing problems, which are particularly acute in his constituency. He said that the problem has been stimulated by the past decade, and particularly the past five years, of Conservative Government. He said that when he first became a Member of Parliament in 1983 there was not a real housing problem, but today there are serious problems of homelessness in his constituency, which in other respects is a rural idyll.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) alarmed and concerned me, because the logic of what he said was that farming should take place only on the richer soils, and nothing much should be done elsewhere to help farmers improve productiveness. He felt that social and environmental schemes should be separate from schemes to improve productiveness, but I see improvements in productiveness tied in explicitly with the need to ensure that that is achieved in an environmentally sensitive way which will help to conserve the best that we have left of our countryside.

"Action for the Countryside" and the schemes associated with it are an attempt—faltering and, thus far, nervous and unambitious—to bring together the issues of productiveness, a thriving rural economy, conservation and enhancement of the countryside. We welcome everything that the Minister has said about "Action for the Countryside" and the schemes that are under way, but it still seems—perhaps the Minister will be able to be more explicit when he replies—that the moneys being used on programmes designed to promote environmentally sensitive farming are equivalent to less than 1 per cent. of what is spent in the United Kingdom on other aspects of farming. I have in mind especially the common agricultural policy. We give a cautious welcome to all that is being done, but we feel that the present cautious steps should be a springboard for further action. Labour's policies on green premiums and an extension of environmentally sensitive areas, which he characterised in a pejorative way—are those that the Government are likely to end up with at the end of their period of office. I hope that that will happen.

There has been talk about planning and I think that a word of caution needs to be urged. Policy planning guidance note 7 has been referred to in, I believe, rather overglowing terms. Many groups, such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England, are rather hesitant about

the many claims of overall advantageous attributes that are made for that piece of guidance by the Government and their supporters. Development control is still a worry. Mineral extraction policy still presents severe threats to the countryside and to sites of special scientific interest. Certain agricultural activities are also endangering such sites. Transport policy, which the hon. Member for Surrey, East referred when he talked about the M25 extension, is also extremely worrying in the context of the conservation of the countryside.

Let us consider some aspects of the Government policies contained in "Action for the Countryside". First, the hedgerow incentive scheme is a step in the right direction, but from what I can gather the amount of money available for the scheme is not likely to be able to save more than about 5 per cent. of the hedgerow that has been threatened and is likely to be threatened each year from now on. Perhaps the Minister will be able to confirm that that is the position.

The Minister will recall the debates that took place during consideration of what is now the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. Despite his carping criticism of the Labour party's position on rural policy and its position in rural areas, in Wales the Labour party holds seats in which reside twice or even three times as many farmers as in Conservative areas. Nevertheless, I pay tribute to him for the amendment that he introduced to the planning and compensation measure in his earnest desire to set up a hedgerow protection scheme.

The Minister can be assured that the hedgerow Bill, promoted by the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth), will receive support from the Opposition. As it is No. 17 on the list, and given what the Minister has said, it is likely that the Bill will be enacted by the end of this parliamentary year. There is a great need for the Hedgerows Bill. The Minister half accepted with a nod and a wink that although the Government have had commitments to a hedgerow protection scheme, they have failed to introduce a suitable Bill because of lack of time. I am pleased, therefore, that a Conservative Member has been able to introduce a private Member's Bill on the subject.

When we debated the Planning and Compensation Bill on Report on 19 June 1991, there was a commitment by the Government, which was repeated in July and again in December, that they would introduce legislation. It is a pity that they were not able to do so. Not enough finance is being allocated to the incentive scheme to make a real contribution to saving hedgerows and to ensure that existing hedgerows are properly managed.

Sites of special scientific interest are another serious problem area. They cover about 8 per cent. of the United Kingdom, but unfortunately many of them are under severe threat. It is reckoned that 5 per cent. a year are damaged in some way, some of them seriously. Some of the damage is caused by the granting of planning permission and some is caused by agricultural activity.

The World Wide Fund for Nature is so concerned that it has developed a 10-point action plan to save SSSIs. In our debates on the Planning and Compensation Bill, we raised issues relating to the way in which the SSSIs might be protected. Some of the proposals from the World Wide Fund for Nature could make a real contribution to the protection and enhancement of SSSIs.

The fund suggests that there should be a presumption against development on SSSIs. Such a presumption would have saved Oxleas wood. Even if it were applied at this stage, it would save the ancient Welsh woodland of Carmel woods from depredation by quarrying over 250 acres, provided that Dyfed county council is prepared to accept the compromise agreement by which McAlpine would quarry the other 200 acres or so.

Severe problems are created by old interim development orders and long-standing planning permissions. The fund's other positive and helpful proposals include mandatory environmental assessments in respect of any development proposal affecting an SSSI. There should be public inquiries in cases where a statutory country conservation agency objects to a development. That proposal was also debated during the progress of the Planning Compensation Act 1991, but was rejected by the Government.

There should be a review also of all outstanding permissions for mineral extraction affecting SSSIs. The Government could follow the example set by West Germany in 1972. It revoked every planning permission, saying that environmental considerations were such that new applications would have to be lodged, and that they would be subject to new tests of whether planning permission ought to be granted.

**Mr. Skinner:** My hon. Friend will be aware that in 1984 the Government introduced circular 3/84, which allowed opencast mining. No longer were the beauty and characteristics of the countryside a consideration, but only whether coal was needed. Today, 18 million tonnes of coal are being extracted from British fields, and the figure is growing apace. Surely now is the time to withdraw that circular. We have no need for opencast because we have plenty of deep-mined coal.

It is crazy for the Government to allow opencast mining to continue. That matter affects the countryside. I attended a tribunal appeal hearing the other day——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that interventions should be short.

**Mr. Skinner:** Yes, and Ministers' speeches should be short as well. You must have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Minister is trying to stop me having my debate.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Two wrongs do not make a right—even supposing that the Minister was wrong.

**Mr. Skinner:** So the Minister was wrong.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Even supposing that the Minister was wrong.

**Mr. Skinner:** Well, he is a Tory—so I expected that.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. I agree with him entirely. The guidance on quarrying and opencast mining is a disgrace to any Government who claim to be protecting and enhancing the countryside. An opencast area behind my back garden was closed recently, pending the inspector's report on a public inquiry into whether an extension to that activity should be granted. That would create havoc in the countryside behind my own back garden. My hon. Friend raises a serious point.

Improvements could also be made to the identification and notification of marine biology SSSIs. The World Wide

*[Mr. Griffiths]*

Fund for Nature also points out that there ought to be comprehensive monitoring of SSSIs and publication of data, to prevent the decline of SSSIs. The fund cites the Basingstoke canal, which is threatened with an increase in motorised boating. The notification of SSSIs should be scientific decision—not encumbered or threatened because planning permission exists that might discourage a Minister to approve an SSSI, however scientifically merited such a decision might be.

It would also be good to see strong and effective penalties for damaging or destroying SSSIs. After all, that happens with listed buildings, and there is a good comparison to be made between listed buildings of great historic interest and the countryside and landscapes of equal historic interest. I hope that the Minister will consider the case for introducing legislation similar to that which prevents the destruction of listed buildings so as to prevent the destruction of the countryside and especially SSSIs.

The last of the 10 points from the World Wide Fund for Nature concerns a system of positive incentives for SSSI management to replace the existing "profits forgone" system, and the unreasonable headline-catching compensatory claims, such as that made not long ago for Glen Feshie in Scotland.

There is an overwhelming nature conservation case for SSSIs to receive special protection, and it would be good if the Government had the target of ensuring that at least 10 per cent. of the best wildlife habitat was protected in that way. If the Minister did that, he would certainly have the support of the 25 organisations with conservation interests, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the many others which produced the health check of SSSIs.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds did a similar health check on United Kingdom sites affecting migratory and wading birds, and found that about 60 per cent. of those sites were threatened by one development or another. So there is a strong case for the Government to take action.

I believe that the Minister was thinking of SSSIs when he referred to the EC habitats directive—an important measure designed to protect important conservation areas, which will come fully into effect in 1994. Article 3 of the directive requires the United Kingdom to restore habitats of Community importance. I wonder whether the Government have yet made any decision or given any thought to which SSSIs to designate as of Community importance—perhaps even all of them.

**Mr. Barry Field:** Has the hon. Gentleman seen the parliamentary questions that I have tabled as part of a campaign to move the Government forward on the Ramsar convention, in connection with the wetland habitats in the Solent? The most recent reply that I received from the Minister was that a programme had been announced for the consideration of sites under that convention.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Yes. I was talking to the RSPB about that aspect of SSSIs only yesterday. Clearly, such important international conventions must be adhered to. The Secretary of State for the Environment emphasised the need to adhere to them as part of the reason for the Government's exceeding caution at Rio. Before signing conventions, they wanted to be sure that they could adhere to them.

Under article 6 of the EC directive, sites of Community importance are to be protected. That raises an important question that I have been trying to persuade the Minister to address with some questions that I have recently tabled about SSSIs. I have been trying to find out whether the Government are prepared to make it their policy to give SSSIs complete protection. Unfortunately, the answers that I received made it clear that the Government were not prepared to give complete protection to those sites.

Article 6 of the EC directive could be interpreted as meaning that protection means just that—complete protection and no development at all. Article 8 provides for the conservation of the wider countryside and landscape outside the designated areas. The Government will have to pay greater attention to areas beyond those that have been designated as sites of special scientific interest.

**Mr. Skinner:** And to the Pennine Way.

**Mr. Griffiths:** As my hon. Friend points out, the Pennine Way is very important and suffers severely from overuse.

It would be interesting to know whether the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has taken legal advice on the issue. If the EC habitats directive is to be properly implemented in the United Kingdom, additional legislation will be required, or significant amendments will have to be made to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Does the Minister intend to introduce new legislation to implement the EC habitats directive? What measure does he intend to introduce to honour EC obligations to avoid the deterioration of important conservation areas? Does he intend to extend planning controls to the 12-mile limit of our territorial waters to deal with the significant problems that face marine conservation?

A number of important issues relating to SSSIs will have to be dealt with, not least because of some aspects of our planning law and other issues relating to agricultural development. Farmers are permitted to erect buildings and lay down agricultural tracks. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 has provided local authorities with additional powers to monitor those developments. It requires landowners and farmers to notify the local planning authority of their intentions. Local authorities now have the power to intervene in order to obtain agreement about what exactly a farmer wishes to do. Unlike the rest of the planning law relating to non-agricultural and non-forestry development, there is no power under our planning laws that allows the local planning authority to monitor exactly what is happening in the countryside, with the result that from time to time farmers give rise to consternation among the communities who live in the countryside because of the mayhem they have caused.

I have a specific example of that in my constituency. This evening, I shall attend a meeting at Bryntirion comprehensive school in the Cefnglas area of Bridgend, where it is predicted that between 300 and 500 people will attend because of works undertaken by a local farmer. Last summer, under the guise of laying down some agricultural tracks, he began work on the edge of a dual carriageway for which he did not have proper planning

permission. Anyone passing would have imagined that it was a new trunk road entry and exit on to the dual carriageway.

The House may not be surprised to learn that, although the farmer has appealed against the local authority's enforcement order to comply properly with the regulations on laying agricultural track, he has made a planning application for a 75-hectare housing development alongside the purported agricultural roads. I wanted my local authority to issue a stop order immediately, because the scale of the work was such that anybody could see that it was not an agricultural track, but it made a conservative interpretation of the law, arguing that because he had the right to construct an agricultural track it could issue only an enforcement notice to make him turn it into a proper agricultural track. The application has now been overtaken by events.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman is making an important point. His concern about hard-standings and roads generally is widely shared. This important matter must be considered in future planning policy. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Such incidents are widespread, so proper planning procedures should apply at least to some aspects of agricultural development. That is the strong feeling of many of my constituents who live on the outskirts of Bridgend and in nearby villages such as Pen-y-fai.

**Mr. Skinner:** I bet he contributes to the Tory party.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I do not know. I would hesitate to say anything about an association with the Tory party because an independent councillor in the north of England got libel damages from a Labour candidate who had alleged that he had supported the Tories on the local council. I should not want to stray on to such dangerous ground.

A strong case can be made for certain agricultural developments coming properly under planning law. I appreciate that often farmers are pushed into such developments because of the difficulties that they experience in making a living. That is why it is so important that the Government's "Action for the Countryside" should not just be a bit of window dressing for their overall agriculture policies, as it is at the moment, but should become the main focus for consideration of agriculture in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Skinner:** We have been told in the debate that some farmers cannot make a living. Some hon. Members will be aware of three farmers in my constituency who have been prevented from making a living because of the amount of dioxin in the milk in Bolsover. That has been going on for a year, yet this lousy rotten Minister of Agriculture knows that those farmers were not paid after last May, with the result that they do not have anything to do. They have been sent a booklet about alternative farming systems, and I suppose that they might finish up being pushed into doing some of the jobs to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) referred.

In that case, the action should be the same as is taken in Holland. The Government should make sure that those farmers are compensated for the dioxin that is pouring out of Coalite in the area. The Government should then take Coalite on—why not, if they could take on the Falklands campaign?—and get the money back. That is what they do in Holland, and it should be done in Bolsover, instead of expecting those three farmers to live on fresh air. It is a scandal. Twelve months have gone by and still the dioxin is going into the milk——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Member of the need to keep interventions short.

**Mr. Skinner:** A lot of people in Bolsover have told me to make long interventions on that subject.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member's constituents are not in the Chair. I am.

**Mr. Barry Field:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is obvious that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had been concentrating so much on class consciousness that he has failed to notice that the Minister is now at the Department of the Environment and is not an agriculture Minister.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr. Skinner:** Further to that statement, Madam Deputy Speaker, if it was not a point of order——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I said that it was not a point of order.

**Mr. Skinner:** He was the Minister who replied to me on the issue when I raised it before the general election, so I——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The point that the hon. Member is making is not a point of order and I do not propose to take any other matters relating to a bogus point of order.

**Mr. Griffiths:** My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is right to speak about the way in which those farmers have been treated. It is a disgrace and, as he rightly points out, they take a far more sympathetic and positive attitude in the Netherlands to such problems. There, those farmers would have been properly and thoroughly compensated. I hope that the Minister will reflect on the issue, now that he represents a different Department, and will concede the real importance of conserving the environment and having discussions about the matter with his colleagues concerned with agriculture to see whether more positive action can be taken to help those farmers.

A worrying topic is quarrying in the countryside. I have mentioned that there is an opencast operation outside my back door. One that closed recently was extremely well managed, because of the way it went over an area where there had previously been half a dozen drift mines. Indeed, nobody in the village could tell that there was an opencast mine there because a huge bund of earth had been erected around the site. Apart from seeing a few train movements to and from the site, one hardly knew that coal was being taken from the ground by opencast methods.

Beyond that site, however, is the subject of a part-slip that is currently awaiting the inspector's report. The Opencast Executive has said that it cannot operate the site in the same way; nor is it a site of old coal workings. In fact, it is a beautiful piece of countryside. So my village of Cefn Cribwr and people living in farms in the surrounding area would face, if permission were given, the complete destruction of a large area of countryside. They would have to live with a hole in the ground, which one could describe as a huge crater, for between five and 10 years.

*[Mr. Griffiths]*

Given the amount of coal available from other sources, the conservation of the countryside should take precedence in such cases of opencast mining and quarrying. We throw away into waste tips far too much builders' waste and rubble which could be ground down and used instead of the aggregates that are quarried from many sites, including SSSIs. As the Government become more green, I should like to think that they will look seriously at the depredation caused by opencast mining and quarrying, not just on SSSIs but in the countryside at large.

**Mr. Skinner:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the peripatetic workers in opencast mines follow the constructions around and just when one site comes to an end, suddenly another one is made available? What do the managers do then? They make a small fortune from digging out the coal and putting miners out of work. Then they dump toxic waste into the big hole. We are becoming the dustbin of Europe.

**Mr. Griffiths:** My hon. Friend's reference to dumping toxic waste into old opencast workings is a serious one. I should like to think that that could not take place. I hope that the Minister will investigate that thoroughly as soon as he leaves the Chamber this afternoon.

I hope that the Government will look into the whole issue of quarrying, because we quarry far more aggregate than we need. Far too much builders' rubble and associated waste could be used instead of aggregate, which would be extremely helpful in conserving the countryside.

Great play has been made about the Government's efforts to ensure proper access to the countryside and the Minister mentioned the schemes that they are trying to promote. In 1987 the Conservative party manifesto included a commitment to introduce legislation on the policies of the Common Land Forum. It did not appear in the last manifesto and seems to have disappeared from sight. It would have done a great deal to improve access to the countryside.

The Ramblers Association has raised with me the issue of the sale of Forestry Commission land and the loss of public access involved in that. Between 1981 and 1989, 140,000 hectares of land were sold and access was lost to many rights of way which had previously been open to the general public. In 1989 it was announced that the Forestry Commission should aim to sell a further 100,000 hectares by the year 2000.

The Government recognised the need to do something about the loss of access, so they set up a scheme which allowed local authorities to negotiate access agreements with the Forestry Commission before it sold land. Unfortunately, it is not a statutory requirement on local authorities. Because of the extra financial costs involved at a time of acute financial difficulties for councils, such as poll tax and council tax capping, few agreements have been brought to fruition. I believe that there is one access agreement now and a further 14 being negotiated. In Wales, for example, 40 access agreements have been offered on Forestry Commission land, but only three taken up. That is a serious problem which my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) tried to put right in the previous Parliament by introducing a private Member's Bill. In doing so, he said that many of the commission's forests were popular recreation areas. He specified the Gwydwr forests around Betws-y-Coed in Snowdonia, Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, Thetford forest in East Anglia, Dalby forest in North Yorkshire and the Queen Elizabeth forest park near Loch Lomond. In addition, the Forestry Commission manages the New forest in Hampshire.

My hon. Friend said that there were examples of woods that had been sold by the commission and had resulted in a loss of public access. Pen wood, south of Yeovil in Somerset was sold in 1983, since when the car park and picnic sites have been closed, the entrance to the wood locked, and notices erected forbidding the public to enter.

Unfortunately, the Government did not agree with my hon. Friend's attempts to allow freedom of access to forests. Given the Minister's keenness to provide access, I hope that he will be prepared to reconsider the matter. He should be particularly eager, bearing in mind the problems of access that exist in other parts of the country, such as the Peak district and my home territory of Brecon Beacons national park where from a distance one can see huge brown swathes of the countryside where people, anxious to enjoy the environment, have gone for walks and simply walked away the grass. I believe that if there were more access points to the countryside, the pressure would be taken off the most popular districts. I hope that the Minister will reconsider.

**Mr. Peter Atkinson** (Hexham): Surely, increasing access, particularly to upland commons as the Common Land Forum recommended, would cause even more damage. The hon. Gentleman must accept that all the scientific evidence shows that unrestricted access to and rights to roam on uplands causes considerable damage to wildlife and the enviornment. Therefore, access must be controlled.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I agree that access should be managed, but in many districts access is entirely prohibited. I am sure that, with a bit of good will on all sides—ramblers, country land owners, the Government, the Open Spaces Society—we could reach an agreement over more open, but managed, access. I am only sorry that the Government reneged on their commitment to try to take up some of the ideas of the Common Land Forum.

The Government's recent announcement on the M25 will have serious consequences for the conservation of the countryside if the Government intend to solve transport problems around London by extending the M25 to 14 lanes. The recently announced scheme will damage 81 important wildlife sites, including 10 sites of special scientific interest and nine sites of nature conservation interest. The M25 extension scheme also threatens 47 ancient woodlands. Let us not even begin to think about the pollution problems that will be caused to the surrounding district from the increased volume of traffic on the M25.

Friends of the Earth has been considering the announcement and has estimated that 60 per cent. of the works needed to extend the M25 and the associated distributor road network will erode the green belt. That is very serious in view of the Government's commitment to conservation in the countryside.

Hundreds of homes will be destroyed, as will large numbers of sites of special scientific interest and areas of outstanding natural beauty in the Chilterns, the Surrey hills and the Kent downs. Five National Trust properties

are within a stone's throw of the proposed works. Who knows what damage they could suffer? There will be a huge increase in pollution. At Addlestone on the M25 it has been recorded that nitrogen dioxide deposits have risen by 92 per cent. since the motorway opened. A large number of serious problems are associated with the proposed extension and all the good things that the Minister claims he wants to achieve will be damaged.

The Minister referred to his indicative forestry strategy. Most of the voluntary organisations involved in conservation believe that that strategy will not deal with many of the problems because it is concerned mainly with creating new woodland—which is desperately needed—and includes nothing for the management of existing woodland, where more resources need to be concentrated.

I wish to conclude, but I am not sure how long it will take. I want to make an important point on a matter that the Minister also raised. There is a need to promote the rural economy. There is no doubt that rural deprivation is a serious problem. Whole areas and communities in England, Wales and Scotland are now without a bus service. There are villages with no shops, no post offices, no youth clubs, no doctors' surgeries, no banks, no community centres and, in too many places, no schools. The quality of life for those who are used to living in the countryside is being severely threatened. For many people who come to the countryside because they can afford to live there, the threats may not appear to be so serious, but they are serious indeed for the resident communities.

As the Minister said, employment is the key. Unfortunately, his planning policy guidance note 7 has caused some consternation among conservation bodies because it appears to imply that in certain circumstances development might take precedence over important conservation points. If he were to extend schemes such as the environmentally sensitive area scheme and the wildlife enhancement scheme and put them on a more general footing, that would revive traditional countryside skills for the conservation of our countryside. Environmentally sensitive agricultural practices would provide more employment. That would begin to tackle the problems associated with the loss of services in the countryside.

The woodland scheme could be beefed up. Perhaps the farm diversification scheme, with which the Minister will be familiar from his time in MAFF, could be beefed up for rural businesses. Provided that it is interpreted fairly closely, we could get the sort of development in the countryside that would be extremely helpful to it.

The Government's countryside action plan is for England and does not extend to Wales. However, most of the initiatives are present in one form or another although they have not been brought together. The Tir Cymen initiative is more general than the Government's countryside stewardship scheme because it is not targeted at specific types of landscape. The pilot project has been undertaken in three quite different rural areas of Wales —in Meirionnydd, which has a large upland area, in Dinefwr, which is in a beautiful lowland area, and in Swansea which takes in the Gower peninsula where there is a rural area with tremendous tourist pressures. It covers all types of habitat and landscape.

More needs to be done to promote environmentally sensitive agriculture, which could lead to a return of many traditional countryside skills and provide needed employment. That will lead to the return of shops, post offices and schools and other services. While we endorse all that the Government are doing, we plead for a wider and more general application of their schemes and the provision of more resources from and diversification of the CAP budget to environmentally sensitive practices. That is where the future prosperity of the rural economy lies.

2.21 pm

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on initiating the debate. This is one of the few occasions during the year on which Back Benchers have a chance to initiate discussion on important subjects. Therefore, it is all the more deplorable that the two Front-Bench spokesmen between them spoke for over two hours.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight justly has a reputation for being concerned with environmental issues. I have seen that at first hand through his diligent work on the Select Committee on the Environment. Therefore, I was not at all surprised at his choosing this important subject for debate. I was also pleased that my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) had the opportunity to make their maiden speeches on this subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East is to introduce a private Member's Bill following the lines of an amendment that I once tabled. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) graciously spoke about that, but I warn him that he should not hold out too much hope, because I tried a private Member's Bill before I tried the amendment and it was blocked by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside gave a detailed exposition of the Government's approach to countryside issues. I am sure that he would be the first to agree that much of the work in that sphere was carried out by his predecessor Sir David Trippier, who was a distinguished Minister in the Department of the Environment. He was one of those largely responsible for bringing a rather greener view to Government policies.

One of the problems that we face is that the countryside is approached as a monolith by almost everybody who brings a policy to bear on it. We have heard about some of the issues that affect the countryside. Hon. Members have spoken about rural poverty, problems with schools, the disappearance of shops, unemployment, farm incomes and access. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight spoke about the problems of coastal management and coastal erosion.

The trouble is that not all these problems occur in every rural area. Those of us who represent the rural areas surrounding big cities experience wholly different problems from those who represent remote and inaccessible rural areas. I sometimes think, when I see the circulars that are prepared about diversification in farming suggesting schemes such as bed and breakfast, farm shops and caravan sites, that they may be all very well in Montgomeryshire, but they are inappropriate to the rural fringe of London.

To someone living in inner London, the countryside may be Richmond park or Epping forest. The rural area in my part of the world will be the sort of area that we have to defend from the large numbers of people who want to live there and the even larger numbers who want to visit.

*[Mr. Robert B. Jones]*

In remote rural areas, the countryside undoubtedly is a place where incomes have been depressed over recent years as a result of agricultural policy.

I shall deal now with some of the environmental background. I have been associated with the campaign to preserve hedgerows, but other issues concern me, such as the loss of old pasture and hay meadows. In 1932, there were 5·48 million hectares used for such a purpose, but the latest estimate is that it is down to 0·12 million hectares —a decline of 98 per cent. over 60 years. There has been a tremendous drainage of fens and wetlands and many of the close-planted conifer plantatations have been responsible for major environmental problems.

Butterflies have been mentioned today and if I may quote a distinguished constituent of mine, Gordon Beningfield the wildlife artist:

> "Butterflies more than any other living thing sum up for me the spirit of the British countryside in summer, but the land of quiet glades and flower-filled meadows has all but disappeared."

That is true, and that is why the Government are, at long last, taking appropriate action, although I for one wish that they would take more action, and quicker. Their policies on hedgerows are extremely welcome, but when one compares the expenditure on the CAP with what is being spent on the environment, one wonders who is responsible for achieving that balance. After all, people are prepared to support farm incomes through their taxation because they see what farmers do in managing the countryside as preserving the rural environment of which they are proud.

Even in Britain, most people can trace their ancestry to rural roots within a few generations and we all have an interest in the countryside. That is why the quid pro quo of support for farming incomes, of which I thoroughly approve, must be the greater direction of resources to ensuring that farmers gain out of our growing environmental concern.

Planning has rightly been mentioned today. At half-past four on Sunday morning, when I dare say my hon. Friend the Minister was still dealing with his red boxes, I got up to walk from Ivinghoe beacon along the Ridgeway—a beautiful summer's day walk. Part of the way along that walk, on which we were accompanied by the "Heart of the Country" television programme, we saw a five-bedroomed house that had been built originally as a shepherd's cottage. The Conservative Government have achieved great things in spreading wealth among our people, but even they have not succeeded to the extent that five-bedroomed "shepherd's cottages" are what they purport to be.

We have had severe problems with the sub-division of farms, described in some detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight. We have also had problems with barns, which need to be preserved. They are beautiful buildings that have outlived their purpose because they are not suitable for modern farm machinery. However, they are best used for some purposes in some areas and other purposes in others. In my constituency I would rather see them as residential units easing the pressure on urban land, but in other areas it may be appropriate to relate them to jobs.

It seems that we should not lay down a rule for the countryside generally. That is why in the short time that is left to me in this debate I plead with my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that countryside policy is not monolithic but something that represents and takes into account the problems of every individual part of the countryside, whether those problems are overcrowding and urban pressures, rural poverty or a declining national asset in terms of the wetlands, our butterflies and our hedgerows.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

# Orders of the Day

## European Union (Public Information) Bill

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 3 July.*

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 30th June, if proceedings on the Motion on Select Committees related to Government Departments have not been previously disposed of, the Speaker shall, one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon—

(a) if the Question last proposed from the Chair is the Main Question, call a Member to move any amendments thereto which may have been selected, and the Questions thereon shall be put forthwith, and then put the Main Question or the Main Question as amended; or

(b) if the Question last proposed from the Chair is for the amendment of the Motion, put that Question and then proceed as aforesaid; and

the said proceedings may be entered upon or continued after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

### BROADCASTING

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Nick Ainger, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Bruce Grocott, Mr. David Harris, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, Kate Hoey, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Gordon McMaster, Mr. Tony Newton and Mr. Matthew Taylor be members of the Select Committee on Broadcasting. —*[Mr. David Davis.]*

## County Hall, London

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

2.30 pm

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your advice and guidance. I thought that Fridays were days when Back-Bench Members were given a chance to speak. In my judgment, there has been a gross abuse of the House by the occupants of both Front Benches, whose speeches took up two-and-a-quarter hours of debating time. Several Back-Bench Members gave up their Friday and gave up engagements last night——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. When I stand the hon. Member must sit. I had already taken on board the hon. Member's point of order and I have some sympathy with it. He will know that it is not a matter for the Chair. If he is aggrieved, he or any other hon. Member must take up the matter privately with the Front-Bench Members who are concerned. We are taking time from the Adjournment debate, which I am not anxious to do. Ms. Kate Hoey.

2.31 pm

**Ms. Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall): I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the future of county hall. I am pleased also that the Minister is replying, because he has taken a great deal of interest in the Waterloo area. He was supportive in his pre-ministerial days of groups such as the Coin Street Community Builders in their efforts to build low-cost housing for rent.

Over recent weeks there has been much rumour and speculation about county hall. There has been a full and informative debate in the other place and an early-day motion signed by more than 150 Members calling on the Government to use their powers to delay the sale of county hall while full and detailed consideration is given to the proposal by the London School of Economics for it to become its home. The 150 signatures include Members from all parties in the House. The future of county hall is no longer a party political issue but one about a future for a great and historic building in London.

I speak on the issue, first and foremost, as the Member whose constituency includes county hall. I see the LSE using the building to be in the best interests of the people in my area, and especially in Waterloo. There is a thriving community in Waterloo, as I and others continue to try to remind people. That community has suffered in many ways from more and more office development.

People living in the area have had their lives disrupted substantially by the channel tunnel works. Only this week the traders, shopkeepers and residents of Lower Marsh market, which lies behind Waterloo station, met representatives of British Rail and its contractors, Bovis, to draw attention to just how much damage is being done to market trade by the temporary closure of access roads and by the levels of dirt and dust. These factors have inevitably put off shoppers from using the market. Lower Marsh market needs county hall to be full of people. It also needs people who will be part of the community, not just people who come to stay for one, two or three days and who spend most of their time taking taxis from county hall to see sights in London.

Along the river by the south bank, we are trying to create an area that can inter-relate with the community rather than be apart from it. To have the London School of Economics, which is part of a university, in county hall would be of enormous value to the area. The LSE, which is internationally famous, would give a huge uplift in status to my borough. There would be many ways in which the expertise of the LSE could be used to help the borough. Already, the LSE has committed itself to appointing a community liaison officer, as a first gesture if the proposal goes through, who would work with the other interests on the south bank and especially with local people. There would be jobs for local people and for many of the borough residents who do not have English as a first language, there would be great opportunities to work with the language unit of the LSE. Those proposals are not just pipe dreams. They are ideas which have already been agreed in the heads of agreement drawn up when Lambeth granted planning permission to the LSE earlier this year. The other advantage is that the LSE has committed itself to allowing London Underground a site on the car park beside county hall to use as a spoil site for the Jubilee line, if it goes ahead, thus saving Jubilee gardens and allowing the marathon to continue to end there.

I was greatly disturbed to read that some people suggest that those of us who support the LSE are in some way anti-Japanese. Those are not my feelings and I do not believe that they are the feelings of anyone involved in support for the LSE. I feel rather sorry for the Japanese developer. He has been slightly misled and when he realises the strength of feeling on the issue, he will look again at his

*[Ms. Kate Hoey]*

position. He may consider his agent's remarks in London this week to be unwise. The agent publicly accused the LSE of "criminally irresponsible behaviour".

Will the Minister confirm that the LSE is conducting perfectly properly negotiations with the Government under the terms of the contract? Will he confirm that the LSE and his Department's officials are acting properly? It is important for the Government's response to the Japanese developer's agent's remarks to be put clearly on record.

I remind the Minister that the reason why there is no bid from the LSE to consider is that last September, Sir Godfrey Taylor, the head of the London residuary body, categorically told the LSE at a meeting that there were two criteria for the sale of county hall. The first was that the site must be sold as a whole and the second was that it could be sold only with planning permission. Neither criterion is met by the Japanese developer. The site has not been sold as a whole; we are told that the Japanese have bought only the riverside site. The Japanese have not got planning permission for the development that they want. Will the Minister confirm that the Shirayama bid meets neither criterion, because the Japanese have bought only the riverside site and have not received planning permission for the development?

Clearly, the LSE wants to work out a bid. However, it is difficult to come up with a bid if one is not given access to the building. The London residuary body has, throughout this protracted saga, been reluctant to allow anyone access to county hall. I was given permission after much effort and many requests. In fact, there is not a great deal to see if one has been inside the building, as I have—but if the LSE is to devise a plan, its representatives need more than a five-minute walk round the building.

The LSE needs to know also the size of the Japanese bid. If Shirayama is to be given until October 1993 to complete its bid, surely the LSE can be given even a few weeks. It needs also to undertake a structural survey. The LRB is probably in possession of seven or eight structural surveys paid for with public money. I do not understand why a public institution such as the LSE should not be given access to any information that the board has about the state of county hall. Will the Minister undertake to allow the LRB to pass copies of its structural surveys to the LSE? If not, why not?

Will the Minister give an assurance that if Mr. Shirayama wants to get out of his contract, he will be allowed to do so? The contract's opt-out clause applies only to the Government. I understand that the Shirayama bid has created a lot of interest in Japan, where many are asking why a Japanese company wants to buy county hall and turn it into a hotel when the people of London would prefer it to be occupied by an institution such as the LSE.

I do not suggest that the Minister could be bullied by anyone, but will he ensure that the Secretary of State for the Environment will not be bullied by Sir Godfrey into concluding a deal very quickly? No deal should be struck until the LSE bid has been properly considered.

The Government must reach a decision soon. We cannot allow speculation and rumour-mongering to continue. Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that the issue will come back to the Floor of the House for discussion, and not just be dealt with in the form of a written answer? There has been a debate in the other place as well as this Adjournment debate and, in view of that huge amount of interest, I hope that the Minister will undertake to make a statement at the appropriate time, and to allow further debate.

Does the Minister acknowledge that the LSE wants to move to county hall without having recourse to public funds? It has made its own plans, and must be given the opportunity to come up with ideas. The Minister can help by acknowledging, if other members of the Government will not, that the LSE does not want to have recourse to public funds.

Although this is a constituency matter, it is also of Londonwide and national interest. To allow an institution such as the London School of Economics, which is known world wide, to occupy county hall would do a great deal of good to my area, London and the country. Given the number of other public assets that the Government have sold at less than their full commercial value, I cannot understand their objection in this instance. Of course, we cannot simply give the building away, but county hall was built with public money for public use, and there would be widespread support if the Minister said that the Government would fully consider the LSE bid.

I hope that by the time the LSE celebrates its 100th anniversary, in two or three years' time, it will do so in my constituency on the south bank opposite the House of Commons.

2.45 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robin Squire):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey) both on obtaining a debate on this subject at such an opportune time and on the way in which she made her speech, and I thank her for her kind personal comments—if this continues, one or both of us may be in trouble with our party authorities.

I fully appreciate that hon. Members on both sides of the House will share the concern that the hon. Lady has expressed about the future of this fine building. I can assure them that my colleagues in the Government and I are equally committed to ensuring that such a prominent landmark on the London scene—and one so readily visible from the House—receives the full measure of protection which it deserves and needs to preserve its historic qualities. I have been active long enough in the political life of London to know the respect and affection in which county hall is held by Londoners—in that respect, I distinguish the building from some of the people who have occupied it in recent years. It is essential, therefore, that the decision taken about its future should be the right one in the interests of Londoners and of the country as a whole.

I must first remind the House of the legal position. The responsibility for disposing of county hall was assigned by the Local Government Act 1985 to the London residuary body. That body has done yeoman service for the citizens of London in discharging its function of disposing of land and property formerly owned by the Greater London council. Since 1986 it has distributed about £520 million in capital receipts to the London boroughs, to the general benefit of ratepayers and charge payers.

In carrying out that task, the residuary body was subject to clear statutory obligations—the same as those that are binding on all local authorities under the terms of

the Local Government Act 1972. They prohibit the residuary body from disposing of land for any consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained for it in the interests——

**Ms. Hoey** *rose*——

**Mr. Squire:** I believe that I shall reach the point that the hon. Lady wishes to make. If I do not, I shall try to give way in time—but I believe that I can anticipate what she wants to say.

The residuary body cannot dispose of land for any consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained for it in the interests of local charge payers in London. If the body wished to dispose of it for any lesser consideration it would first have to obtain the specific consent of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State—although I understand that he has no power to direct the body in that way.

Reference has been made outside the House to two cases in which the residuary body has disposed of areas of the south bank to the south bank board for a nominal price, and it has been suggested that those cases should provide a precedent for the treatment of county hall. But those cases are quite different. In both of them the residuary body was careful to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. The first relates to an area of gardens which the South Bank Board has been managing for some time. The land is subject to agreements which prevent it from being used for any other purpose, and the residuary body took the view that disposal for a nominal sum was the most effective way of ensuring the continued maintenance of these gardens in the public interest.

In the second case there is development and the residuary body has therefore taken action to protect the interests of local charge payers in London by inserting a claw-back agreement which will ensure that they receive a proper return from the proceeds of such development.

Against that background, and with those clear statutory obligations in mind, the residuary body entered into agreement with the Shirayama company in March this year. Some recent press reports have been taken as suggesting that Shirayama has withdrawn or expressed a wish to withdraw from that agreement. I can assure the House that there is no truth in that, and that the reports were false.

The agreement relates to the riverside building—which is, as the hon. Lady said, the handsome building facing us immediately across the river, which everyone thinks of as county hall—but not to the other buildings which form part of the county hall site. It provides for the sale of the riverside building to be completed in October next year. It also provides a power for the residuary body—but not Shirayama—to withdraw from the agreement at any time up to the end of this year, in return for the payment of a modest sum by way of compensation.

There is no doubt that the agreement would provide a major and worthwhile focus for the development of the south bank. A new hotel of international reputation with associated conference centre would do much to bring new life and new jobs to an area of London which stands to benefit from them greatly. It would also be a significant attraction to visitors from overseas. It was a major concern of my right hon. Friend, the previous Secretary of State —now the President of the Board of Trade—when he considered the planning application, that the architectural features of the riverside building, including the former council chamber, should be fully respected.

The hon. Lady referred to planning permission. I am advised that Shirayama proposes to implement the planning permission granted by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State. If the company wishes to develop the site in a different way, it might need further planning permission. Should that question arise, it would be a matter for Shirayama and the local planning authority to consider.

**Ms. Hoey:** I understand that the planning permission granted for the building to the previous developers who went bust was for the whole site.

**Mr. Squire:** Beyond repeating, which would be boring, precisely what I have just said, can I undertake to consider the hon. Lady's comment? If it raises a separate issue, I shall write to her after the debate.

**Sir Rhodes Boyson** (Brent, North): This is an issue of great importance to the educational status of this country and to London. There will be a short-term gain, if I may put it that way, if there is a hotel development—though there are plenty of empty hotel rooms all over London —compared with the long-term gain that could be achieved. Sixty per cent. of LSE postgraduates come from overseas and that number is to be doubled. When those postgraduates return home they become leaders of business and Prime Ministers. I believe that at one time one third of the Prime Ministers in the Commonwealth had been to the LSE. Do we intend to forfeit a long-term gain for a short-term gain? I should like the Minister to take up that point, not necessarily now but before he reaches the right decision in the next week or two.

**Mr. Squire:** My right hon. Friend draws on his great experience in order to put a question in a seemingly unanswerable way. My response to him is that the international reputation of the LSE, which I readily confirm, may in the ultimate not necessarily depend on the precise location in London where it carries on its undoubtedly esteemed educational activities.

I feel sure that I shall be supported by all sections of the House when I make it clear, as did the hon. Member for Vauxhall, that there can be absolutely no question of any doubts arising because Shirayama is a Japanese company. This country welcomes, and will always welcome, support from Japanese investment. We do so because we know from experience that we can look to it for sound business sense, reliability and effective and creative management.

We have heard a great deal about the alternative proposals being developed by the London School of Economics. I know that the hon. Lady is by no means alone in finding them attractive. On the contrary, the ready availability of support in all parts of the House—echoed not a moment ago by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)—is displayed by the signatures on early-day motion 259, to which the hon. Lady referred.

These proposals raise a number of complex issues that will need careful consideration in the light of overall priorities. Not least of these is the statutory duty that the residuary body has to the London boroughs and their local taxpayers.

*[Mr. Squire]*

In that context, it seemed clear—at least until recently—that it was unlikely that the LSE, with the resources available to it, including those that might be raised by the sale of its existing premises in Houghton street, would be in a position to match the price that could be obtained for the county hall site as a whole by disposing of it through other channels. It must also be remembered that the agreement with Shirayama relates only to the riverside building. I confirm the hon. Lady's point in that respect.

There have been suggestions in the press recently that the LSE might be able to improve on its earlier proposals, in association with other interests. All that I shall say is that if there is indeed any possibility of such a development, clear proposals should be put to the residuary body as soon as possible. I can confirm that the LSE has discussed its proposals with officials in my Department, but it is also true that, as yet, the LSE has not put any firm proposals to the residuary body which, in law, is responsible for disposing of the site. It has been suggested, and it was repeated by the hon. Lady today, that the LSE cannot do that unless it is granted access to the building. My understanding is that it has had access to relevant documents and that, until Shirayama entered into its agreement in March, it would have had the same facilities for preparing a bid as any other potential developer. As Shirayama has entered into an agreement and is carrying out preliminary work in the riverside building, the question of access for the LSE or other bidders would raise much more difficult issues.

My Government colleagues and I sympathise readily with the understandable concern that has been expressed by the Shirayama company about the uncertainties arising as a consequence of the proposals being put forward by the LSE. We recognise the need for early resolution of the issue. I assure the House that it is our intention that it should be reached as soon as possible.

The hon. Lady asked me, understandably, to give an undertaking today about the form in which that decision will be announced. I cannot give that undertaking, because the decision does not lie with me. I assure her that I will take her strongly expressed views into account when that aspect of the decision is discussed.

We are determined, however, that the decision should be the right one in the interests of Londoners and of the country as a whole. I have not answered the individual questions that the hon. Lady put to me. She will understand that that would not have been possible in every case. I undertake to try to deal with them in a letter to her as soon as possible.

**Ms. Hoey:** I thank the Minister for his response and appreciate that he is in a slightly difficult position. I imagine that the decision will be made at the very top echelons of the Government, but will he confirm again that he will try to arrange a full debate and, more important, that although we want an early decision, it will not be taken until the London School of Economics has been given some time—even a month—to devise a proposal that can be put to the Minister and to the London residuary body? The Minister or his officials must tell Sir Godfrey Taylor that he must co-operate with the London School of Economics. There must be a way of getting around the legal aspects of gaining access; it just seems a nonsense.

**Mr. Squire:** I am grateful for the hon. Lady's further comments. On the first part of her intervention, I can only repeat what I said—that I recognise that it is an important issue and I shall ensure that the way in which the forthcoming decision is communicated is treated as a serious issue in its own right.

On the wider issues, I emphasise that we are discussing an underlying legally binding contract. She will understand that that imposes on those who sign it—the London residuary body and Shirayama—certain rights and responsibilities that it would be imprudent of me to seek to set aside today. Any discussions and decisions that the Government take must be in that light.

I think that I have dealt with the questions asked by the hon. Lady and I join her in looking forward to an early decision.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Three o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Monday 29 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## TRANSPORT

### Motorway Lane Rentals

1. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effects lane rental contracts are having on the speed of repairs and extent of disruption to traffic on motorways.

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor):** Repairs carried out under lane rental contracts are completed some 30 per cent. faster than works under conventional contracts. Our widespread use of that system means that maintenance is completed faster on average than anywhere else in the world, and it has saved about £100 million in the cost of delays to road users since its introduction.

**Mr. Page:** My right hon. Friend will be aware that a large part of my constituency is covered by the M25, so I am glad to hear of those improvements. What is he doing to promote the use of lane rentals? As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, may I ask him to tighten up on lane rental contracts, especially the extension of time? I am sure that my right hon. Friend realises that to have a lane rental contract and then to extend the time makes that contract worthless.

**Mr. MacGregor:** On my hon. Friend's first point, I am glad to say that 50 per cent. of all appropriate contracts for road maintenance are on the basis of lane rentals. Next year, the figure will rise to two thirds, which is about the maximum. Progress in this matter is ahead of the commitments given in the citizens charter.

I am aware of the good report from the Public Accounts Committee and we support a large number of its recommendations. We are dealing with the points that it raised as vigorously as possible, including the one mentioned by my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Pike:** Although we all welcome what the Secretary of State has said, does he recognise that there is still a massive problem? Single lanes on both the M1 and the M6 cause great traffic delays and many safety problems. Can something be done to eliminate that problem in 1992?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The reason for some of the delays is the need to repair and update motorways that were built some considerable time ago. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that the delays would be very much greater if we did not carry out the necessary repairs. The important point is to get the repairs done as quickly as possible, and that is what lane rental contracts are doing.

**Mr. Dykes:** As the Secretary of State for the control of unnecessary cones, can my right hon. Friend give us an up-to-date report on the current position? Far too many motorways have long lanes of cones even when no work is being carried out, and that is especially true at weekends. Are cones to be the only growth industry, apart from security men? I hope that my hon. Friend can give us that up-to-date report.

**Mr. MacGregor:** I share my hon. Friend's view, but it not the only matter with which I have to deal. The amount of maintenance on motorways has risen by 30 per cent., which is why there are more cones about. The lane rental contracts speed up the time it takes to carry out repairs, which should considerably reduce the number of times that we see cones on motorways.

On my hon. Friend's other point, we insist that all contractors give information to drivers where cones are being used. In particular, they must give information about why cones are being used if it does not appear that any work is being carried out. If anyone sees a 4-mile stretch of cones where it appears that no work is being done and there is no information to tell people what is happening, I hope that they will let me know.

### Red Routes

2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what effect the red route pilot projects have had on the traffic flow in London.

**The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris):** On the pilot red route overall accidents have reduced by 36 per cent., with accidents for cyclists down by 55 per cent. and for mopeds/motor cyclists by 60 per cent. In addition, bus journey times have reduced by more than 10 per cent. and their reliability has been improved by a third.

**Mr. Greenway:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on those figures. Will he confirm that my constituents living at the side of the A40, which is shortly to become a red route, will have ingress and egress to and from their properties and that worshippers going to St. John Fisher church in Perivale will be able to continue to do so without let or hindrance?

As wheel clamps are never used on red routes, why are they used so freely elsewhere?

**Mr. Norris:** It has always been the case that the key to red route implementation is flexibility, and that the local community's ability to go about its normal business is uppermost in our minds. I can give my hon. Friend the reassurances that he seeks in respect of his constituents.

**Mr. Chris Smith:** Does not the Minister accept that he and his Department are living in a completely different world from those of my constituents who are affected by the red route scheme? Residents with a year's experience of the red route know that it has succeeded only in attracting more traffic to a part of London that is already congested. In addition, it spells disaster for local traders and shopkeepers. Should not the Minister wake up to that reality?

**Mr. Norris:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong on both counts. There is no evidence of extra traffic. Any increase—bar 2 per cent. that is currently unaccounted for—derives from rat-running traffic being taken back on to the main road, where it ought to be. The hon. Gentleman knows that many businesses off the red route in Islington have suffered equally difficult times. There is no evidence to connect lower business activity with the existence of red routes.

**Mr. Horam:** Does my hon. Friend accept that although there is a great deal of support for the red route policy, it could be defeated if too much traffic is forced on to the roads because of deteriorating community rail services? Is he aware that there has been a massive downgrading of the service on Kent commuter lines in particular since May? Some believe that one reason is the desire to create slots for channel tunnel rail services. Will my hon. Friend speak to the director of Network SouthEast to ascertain the facts, and to ensure that the admirable red route policy will not be undermined from that quarter?

**Mr. Norris:** My hon. Friend is right in saying that we ought to consider not only improving traffic performance but investment in public transport. Some £3·5 billion is to be spent on London Underground alone in pursuit of that objective. As to Network SouthEast, my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will convey my hon. Friend's remarks to Network SouthEast.

**Mr. Spearing:** Does the Minister remember telling the House that the additional facilities for walkers, cyclists, and parking were a major element in the red route proposals? Does he recall also telling the House:

"the annual cost of the additional police officers and traffic wardens will be about £25 million."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. *610*.]?

Why does not the Minister provide cycling, walking and parking facilities elsewhere in London, and examine instead preventing congestion—which would surely represent better value for money than that £25 million?

**Mr. Norris:** Red route programme expenditure is devoted entirely to relieving congestion. I thought that the hon. Gentleman understood that. He is right to say that enforcement is the key, which is why his local borough welcomes the powers in part II of the Road Traffic Act 1991, which will release resources for policing the routes.

**Sir John Wheeler:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the red route initiative is very welcome in my constituency, but that if it is to be carried through, it is essential that my hon. Friend reviews the management of bridges across the Thames? All too often, they are closed or have obstructions placed upon them. There is no point in pushing traffic through London if it cannot cross the river.

**Mr. Norris:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for the red route programme. He has been in contact with my office about the important question of bridges, and I assure him that I will take a personal interest in ensuring that river crossings are managed as effectively as possible.

### Traffic Congestion, Wearside

3. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's proposals to reduce road traffic congestion on Wearside.

**The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle):** Apart from the A19 west of Sunderland, which is not congested, the responsibility for roads on Wearside lies with the local highway authority, Sunderland city council.

**Mr. Etherington:** I congratulate the Secretary of State on his new post, and wish him every success in it.

Does the Secretary of State accept that, although billions of pounds have been spent on motorways and bypasses, such measures have only a marginal effect on traffic in urban areas and, indeed, city centres? Does he agree that the way ahead lies in dedicated tramway systems and, possibly, in an extension of the Tyne and Wear metro system from Tyneside to Wearside?

**Mr. Carlisle:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for over-promoting me, but I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State heard what he said and will be grateful for his good wishes.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, in July the city council will be able to present its bids for transport supplementary grant, and I shall of course pay careful attention to the bid from his local authority. It is worth pointing out, however, that last year we accepted the Doxford park access road into our scheme, and that it is one of five local schemes that we are now supporting.

**Mr. Butcher:** Can I persuade my hon. Friend to increase spending in Wearside by approximately £10 million? That is the amount that he would save by abandoning the unwanted, unneeded bypass improvement schemes in Coventry, South-West. My constituents——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has been most ingenious, but he cannot get that one past me. I think that he has probably asked his question now.

**Mr. Butcher:** I am anxious to help my colleague from Wearside, the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Etherington), on an all-party basis. I assure him that there is £10 million in the kitty, from my constituency to his——

**Madam Speaker:** That is excellent, and I am sure that the Minister appreciates it.

**Mr. Carlisle:** My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) brought a delegation to my office. I do not expect ever again to receive a delegation in the House and to be asked not to spend money in an hon. Member's constituency.

**Mr. Boyes:** In view of the congestion in Wearside and other areas, will the Minister consider conducting an experiment to establish the relationship between a reduction in the speed limit from 30 mph to 20 mph and injury levels in defined dangerous areas?

**Mr. Carlisle:** We are considering whether we can extend the criteria under which local authorities will be able to make up their own minds about the speed limit that is suitable in their areas. I hope to make progress on that in the autumn.

### Aviation

4. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on the future of state aids for the aviation industry.

**Mr. MacGregor:** In the light of the important agreement on the single market in aviation reached at the Transport Council on 22 June, the removal of state aids in aviation is now more crucial than ever.

We believe that state aids that distort, or threaten to distort, competition undermine the effective operation of the market and so harm the interests of air passengers. We will therefore continue to press the Commission to use its powers to control these subsidies strictly, particularly where they are used to shore up inefficient carriers or to finance major expansion plans and acquisitions.

**Mr. Evans:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the agreement that he was able to reach in Luxembourg has been widely welcomed? At least Conservative Members recognise it as a significant step forward in the introduction of greater choice and competition. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the great success for which he was responsible is carried forward, thus securing more genuine competition with all European airlines?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The agreement came at the end of 10 years of negotiation in which the British Government took the lead. It represents a major landmark in the development of the European aviation industry, and is far the most significant advance in the opening of European skies to full competition.

**Mr. Prescott:** When is it coming in?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's sedentary question is that 90 per cent. of the arrangement will come in on 1 January next year. Contrary to some press reports, it is coming in pretty quickly.

I very much take the second point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans). I assure him that we shall use our presidency to steer the Community towards better-defined guidelines on state aids, which would have to be followed strictly—I emphasise the word "strictly"—by member states wishing to give aid to their airlines.

**Mr. Sproat:** I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on what he and his officials achieved in Brussels last week. Will he assure the House that he will use the British presidency to ensure that the great potential benefits that he won for passengers are not diluted, delayed or rendered useless by other EC Governments subsidising their own state airlines—as they are still doing—or by, for example, abuses of airport slot allocations or other anti-competitive or anti-consumer local working practices?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The agreement that we reached sets the very significant background to the agreement. As the chairman of British Midland said, it opens up tremendous opportunities. I recognise, however, that there are other steps still to be taken and that there are other significant areas still to be tackled. That in no way undermines the very important advances that we have seen as a result of the agreement. As my hon. Friend rightly mentioned, they are in the areas of state aid which, as I have already said, we shall be taking forward during our presidency. I hope that we shall be able to complete the competition package. I recognise also that slots represent another important aspect in opening up the markets.

**Mr. Snape:** Will the Secretary of State stop reading out his press releases? Does he accept the view of Sir Colin Marshall, the chief executive of British Airways, that

"The agreement is not as much as we"—

meaning them—

"originally hoped for and nowhere near as much as we would have liked"?

Does he also accept the view of Mr. Ian Wild, airline analyst at BZW, who said that

"The EC agreement seems to be couched in such restrictive terms and with so many conditions that it will be a practical impossibility for anyone to achieve radical change"?

Are they talking about the 90 per cent. or the 10 per cent?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I disagree with both comments, particularly the last. There has been a failure by whoever said it to understand just how significant the advances are. The safeguards to which he refers are safeguards to protect passengers against predatory air fares. Both Mr. Richard Branson and Sir Michael Bishop warmly welcome this agreement and understand the importance of this advance. Of course, the agreement does not complete everything. There are still important areas to be tackled in what up to now has been a restrictive and protected market. However, I beg the hon. Gentleman to understand just how significant the advances are. I have already said that we shall be tackling those other areas. We believe that 90 per cent. of what British Airways needs in order to compete more widely in the European markets has been achieved. There is a transitional period on one point, and even there we have negotiated down the period of the transition.

## Roads, Dorset

5. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to improve north-south road links in Dorset.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The national trunk road programme includes two schemes—the A31 to Mannings Heath relief road and the Poole harbour bridge replacement—which, together with trunking an existing section of road, will provide a high-standard trunk road between the A31 and Poole.

Other north-south roads in Dorset are the responsibility of Dorset county council. We support the council's improvement programme through transport supplementary grant, where justified.

**Mr. Bruce:** Surely my hon. Friend knows that the schemes to which he referred amount to approximately a couple of miles, linking in with the east-west routes from the ports, and that they make no difference to the north-south link. My hon. Friend will remember that when he was Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement at the Ministry of Defence he turned down the co-location of Sea Systems Controller in Weymouth, mainly because of the terrible north-south road link between there and Bristol. The roads have not changed. I wonder whether my hon. Friend will use the vigour that he showed in the Ministry of Defence to make sure that he shakes up the Department of Transport and puts real north-south trunk roads into Dorset?

**Mr. Carlisle:** When I was at the Ministry of Defence, my hon. Friend dogged me with his zeal to relocate Ministry of Defence establishments in south Dorset. I can assure him that the fact that his request did not succeed was not because of road links. Nevertheless, I am sure that he will be just as passionate about road links to Dorset, as he has no doubt hammered every single Under-Secretary of State on these matters on behalf of his constituents. The

Government have not done too badly by Dorset. A major link between the A31 and Poole is in the programme. Four other north-south schemes are also in the programme and are supported by us to the tune of about £30 million. It might be worth mentioning, as evidence of our support for Dorset, that in the past 10 years eight bypasses have been built in Dorset, two are now under construction and an additional 15 are in the programme, so Dorset is doing very well by the Department of Transport.

## Roads (Environmental Protection)

7. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to make roads more sympathetic to the landscape through which they pass.

8. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to make roads more sympathetic to the landscape through which they pass.

13. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he is taking to ensure that the natural environment is protected when new roads are built and existing roads improved.

**Mr. MacGregor:** We always undertake a thorough environmental assessment and give great weight to sensitive design in the development of trunk roads. A great deal of time, care and money are devoted these days to designing schemes to fit into the existing landscape.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Will my right hon. Friend recognise the importance of balancing protection of the environment with the needs of an expanding economy? Does he agree that the increase in the number of cars and commercial vehicles on our roads—for example, on the A69 in my constituency—is a direct reflection of that increasing prosperity?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend. As most hon. Members know, much of the pressure for improved roads, new road schemes and, perhaps above all, bypasses comes from our constituents. That is why we have a massive road programme. He is right to say that increased prosperity has led to increased traffic. At the same time, it is important to ensure, as we do, that the environmental impact of our future major networks is as beneficial as possible.

**Mr. Townsend:** I recognise the Government's national success in this regard, but does not my right hon. Friend think, on consideration, that the east London river crossing would be more sympathetic to an 8,000-year-old wood and a site of special scientific interest if his two predecessors had agreed that it should be a cut-and-cover tunnel, as agreed by the inspector at the inquiry?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The crossing was the subject of many inquiries before decisions were taken. I know from having come to the matter afresh that everything has been considered and everything is being done to ensure the minimum environmental effect.

**Mr. Moss:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that if the go-ahead is given for the east coast motorway a comprehensive environmental impact assessment will be undertaken to measure its impact on the unique drainage of the Fens area of my constituency? On the dualling of the A47, will he confirm, if not today then later, that his Department is investigating possible lines of routes both north and south of the River Neve in the vicinity of Wisbech?

**Mr. MacGregor:** The Government have no plans for an east coast motorway. As my hon. Friend will know, that plan was put forward by a consortium of local authorities and private contractors. If at any point—I make it clear that I do not envisage anything—such a scheme were proposed, it would be subject to the full environmental impact assessment that we require of all schemes. My hon. Friend will know that we plan to make a dual carriageway of the whole of the A47 from Peterborough to Great Yarmouth. I know how widely welcomed that is by all road users in Norfolk, my county. I am not aware of the scheme to which he referred, but if I may I shall look into it and write to him.

**Mr. David Marshall:** What new measures, if any, is the Secretary of State taking to improve safety on our roads?

**Mr. MacGregor:** We spend a lot of time and money on measures to improve safety—road signing, road design——

**Mr. Norris:** Red routes.

**Mr. MacGregor:** Yes, on red routes and on matters that I mentioned earlier such as motorway coning. Heavy emphasis is placed on road safety. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that, although we want to do better, the number of road accidents now is the same as in 1948, despite the huge increase in traffic in the intervening period. We not only concentrate heavily on safety but the policy is having its effect.

**Mr. Harvey:** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, however many trees are planted, building new roads damages the environment, as is evidenced by the M25 and M3 at Twyford Down? As the current road building programme will not meet the 1989 traffic growth forecasts, would not a greener policy be to ensure a level playing field in the investment policies of all modes of transport and to devise policies that reduce the public's need to travel great distances?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I think that that demonstrates the muddle that the party to which the hon. Gentleman belongs so often gets into on such matters. He cannot say that we are not building enough roads to meet 1989 growth levels but then complain that we are building too many. However much of a switch there is from road to rail—I am very keen on that and we are pursuing it as much as possible—and however heavily we invest in public transport, as we do, there will still be an increasing demand for traffic by road, as prosperity grows, for individual car passengers and for road haulage. Therefore, we need the road programme and I am very keen on a heavy environmental involvement in it.

On the M25 link road, one of the options involves a considerable take-up of extra land because of the landscaping which will mean an enormous number of trees and shrubs being planted. We are trying to get the proper balance.

**Mr. Prescott:** To judge from the wording of the questions, the Government are more successful at planting questions than planting trees. Does the Secretary of State agree that giving insufficient resources to British Rail while

at the same time providing millions of pounds for the building of 14-lane motorways and millions of pounds for the planting of trees will merely increase the level of car exhaust gas emissions which not only damage the trees but add to the global warming problem?

**Mr. MacGregor:** On the first point, the Government have been very successful at planting trees. The Department of Transport plants more mature broadleaf trees than any other organisation and, as I said earlier, about 300,000 trees and 400,000 shrubs will be planted on the small stretch of the M25 if our preferred option goes ahead. Clearly, there is a heavy emphasis on tree planting.

On the balance between public transport and roads, the M25 proposal will cost £144 million. We are currently spending £700 million on capital investment in London Underground alone and about £2 billion on a very large British Rail capital investment programme. Therefore, there is a balance, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that we should be cutting the road-building programme—other measures will enable us to reach the carbon dioxide emissions target.

**Mr. Garnier:** Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of my constituents for the A6 Market Harborough bypass which was opened last weekend by the Minister for Public Transport? Will he also accept that the building of the bypass has not only improved the environment of Market Harborough by removing cars and noise but has enabled 30,000 or more trees to be planted? Will he please pass on the thanks of my constituents to those involved?

**Mr. MacGregor:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend who makes an important point about bypasses. Bypasses now take up about 30 per cent. of our total road programme and have a tremendously beneficial environmental effect on everyone who lives in the towns and villages that are bypassed.

## Unlicensed Taxis

9. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the risks to passengers involved in the use of unlicensed cabs; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman):** Following representations about the safety of cab users in London, we set up a working party to investigate the subject. It has just delivered its report, which we are studying with interest. We have had no representations about unlicensed cabs outside London.

**Miss Lestor:** I thank the Minister for that reply. When he has had time to study the report, will be bear in mind the fact that the registration and checks kept on licensed black cabs, which have made the service probably one of the best in the world, do not apply to many other private services? As the use of the private sector is becoming so large, should there not be regulations to standardise the type of vehicle used and to ensure that there are the same checks on drivers and safety as apply to the licensed cab service?

**Mr. Freeman:** As the hon. Lady knows, in virtually every local authority outside London, private hire vehicles as well as black taxis have to be licensed. In London, vehicles that are not taxis are not licensed. We have set up a working party and, as I said, we are studying the recommendations carefully to see whether there is a case for introducing a greater degree of licensing in London.

**Ms. Ruddock:** Further to that reply, will the Minister acknowledge that there is a problem with licensed cab services outside London? Does he recall the recent case in which Rotherham magistates court and the Crown court overturned Sheffield city council's rejection of an application for a private hire licence from a man who had been convicted of assault and of drink-driving offences? There are people today driving licensed cabs who, in our view, should not be in charge of either a cab or passengers. When the Minister replied to my letter, he said that it was an "unusual decision", but declined to take further action. Will he reconsider those remarks to me? Will he take account of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's current campaign on the issue, look at the matter afresh and make appropriate representations to his colleagues in the legal departments?

**Mr. Freeman:** I join the hon. Lady in paying tribute to the work of the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. Both the hon. Lady and I have been to a number of functions sponsored by the trust. I agree that there are regrettable instances of some local authorities proceeding to license drivers when, on the face of it, they are not proceeding on a consistent basis with other local authorities. I undertake to study further the case that the hon. Lady cited, to raise the matter with colleagues in the Home Office and to write to the hon. Lady.

## M25

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the widening of the M25.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** Work on the proposals for the M25 announced last September is progressing well.

**Mr. Marshall:** I welcome my hon. Friend's proposals. Does he accept that traffic on the M25 is well above design capacity and that congestion on the M25 will be relieved only when son of M25 is built?

**Mr. Carlisle:** My hon. Friend raises a relevant point. I agree that a lot of traffic uses the M25. Indeed, that is one aspect of its success. It is clearly needed in the motorway network. As my hon. Friend knows, we have plans to convert the M25 within its existing boundaries into four lanes within about six years, which will certainly help. Any other improvements—indeed, all improvements—have to go through a clear scrutiny before they are accepted. We pay great attention to the needs of the environment.

**Mr. Cryer:** Is not the cost of motorway extending and widening extremely high? Why is the Department of Transport prepared to fund extensions with such apparent ease? Is not the real task of the Department to try to encourage people to transfer from road to rail? In that context, why is the Department holding back on a scheme such as Leeds-Bradford electrification and denying authorisation for the money for that scheme, which is in jeopardy because of the Government's railway privatisation proposals?

**Mr. Carlisle:** We have a balanced transport policy. I remind the hon. Gentleman that investment in public

transport is at its highest level for 30 years. We have to put the matter in context. The M25 is crucial for our economic success. It carries much of our traffic—not only local traffic, but traffic going to the main ports. It is one of the busiest roads in the country and is central to our economic performance. Our intention is to make certain that the M25 serves the nation well.

**Mr. Dunn:** The Minister will be aware that in the context of widening the M25, new slip roads are to be built in Dartford connecting the A2 with the M25. Will my hon. Friend give me a personal guarantee that every effort will be made to install noise minimisation measures and proper landscaping for the new slip roads in Dartford?

**Mr. Carlisle:** I am well aware of that scheme and its importance for my hon. Friend's constituents. I shall supervise the work carefully. I should be delighted to discuss with my hon. Friend later the demands for the road surface and for the landscaping to which we attach such importance in all our projects.

**Ms. Walley:** Does not what we have just heard show that the Government have a completely piecemeal approach to transport policy? Given the way in which we have heard about the announcement for the £2·5 billion programme, will the Minister tell us what he is doing about the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment in its report? Why have those recommendations not been taken on board in full in relation to that extension? Will the Minister give me a guarantee that there will be full public consultations in respect of the review of the manual on environmental appraisal which has long been promised and is long overdue?

**Mr. Carlisle:** I think that the hon. Lady's sums are a little wrong. It was announced last week that the link roads between junctions 12 and 15 will in fact cost about £140 million. Moreover, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, we are concentrating on environmental matters in the scheme. Some two thirds of the land take will be used for landscaping—planting trees, and so forth. However, I agree with the hon. Lady that the SACTRA report is important. We are examining its conclusions and we expect to come forward with a new environmental manual very shortly.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

### National Audit Office

28. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what funds have been expended in the last two years by the National Audit Office in maintaining links with similar organisations in the European Community.

**Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission):** The National Audit Office spent about £60,000 in the financial year 1990-91 and £120,000 in 1991-92 on maintaining links with similar organisations in the European Community.

**Mrs. Currie:** I am delighted to hear that the National Audit Office is spending money maintaining links with the European Commission. Given that the most difficult problem with public money is keeping tabs on it, finding out where it has gone and ensuring that we obtain value for money for it, is it not right and proper that we, with our knowledge and expertise in this country, should be sharing the same with our colleagues in the European Community and ensuring that they do the same?

**Sir Peter Hordern:** My hon. Friend is quite right. As she knows, one of the provisions of the Maastricht treaty is to give the European Parliament new powers, which may be turned to examine the Commission as a whole, in respect of examining expenditure in much the same way as our Public Accounts Committee does here. I hope that the budget committee of the European Parliament will be able to carry out its work.

29. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how much the National Audit Office spends on publicity for its reports.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** The National Audit Office handles its own publicity and one member of staff acts as press officer. Advance copies of reports are provided to the press and other interested parties. In the financial year 1991-92, the cost of those copies amounted to about £6,000.

**Mr. Bottomley:** I suspect that that is very good value for money, economical, efficient and effective. Will my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission pass on to the Comptroller and Auditor General my thanks and the thanks of the House as in future those reports are to be made available to hon. Members at 3.30 pm, before they are made available to the press, and not at midnight?

**Sir Peter Hordern:** I am obliged to my hon. Friend.

30. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how many non-departmental public bodies are audited by the National Audit Office.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** The National Audit Office audits the individual accounts of 92 non-departmental public bodies.

**Mr. Morgan:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that reply. Can he comment on the written reply that I received from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury in January which referred to the principle that the choice between having bodies audited by private accountants or by the NAO is normally related to how quasi-commercial are the activities of that public body? Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that no reason will be given to the House relating to lack of resources or staffing in the NAO, for which I believe the hon. Gentleman has a responsibility, as grounds for putting the auditing of grant-maintained schools out to private accountants? A school must be the last public body that one could possibly think of as being quasi-commercial, so the auditing of grant-maintained schools should clearly not be carried out by private accountants.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** I understand that some schools are required to appoint an external auditor and to provide the Department of Education with annual audited accounts. The audit arrangements will be covered by a code of practice on which accountancy bodies and the National Audit Office have been consulted. The hon. Gentleman might also like to know that the Comptroller and Auditor General has rights to inspect the accounts and relevant records of individual schools and to carry out value-for-money studies. The National Audit Office is

currently undertaking a study of the financial control of grant-maintained schools, during which it will exercise those inspection rights. The hon. Gentleman is quite right: there is no question of the National Audit Office suffering from lack of funds.

## TRANSPORT

### Underground Railways

11. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comparisons his Department has done between the London underground and the Paris metro.

**The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris):** My Department has not carried out any comparisons between the London underground and the Paris metro, but I have taken a close interest in the joint report produced by the London Research Centre and its French opposite number, and it is clear from their work that the two railway systems face very different problems and serve very different markets.

**Mr. Cohen:** If the Minister has seen that report from the London Research Centre and the Ile de France regional council, he will have seen that 9 per cent. of French trains and 20 per cent. of London trains are overcrowded; that one in five trains in Paris and one in two in London are more than 22 years old; that fares are three times higher in London than in Paris, and that the city centre rail network in Paris is "overwhelmingly superior" to that in London. Does that not prove that socialist planning in public transport is far superior to capitalist neglect?

**Mr. Norris:** No, Madam Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is extraordinarily selective in the little gems that he picks from the report because he thinks that they suit his case, and he completely ignores the £3·5 billion which is to be spent on the London underground in the next three years.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Clocking-on

31. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will now end the system of clocking on and off for workers in and around the House.

**Mr. Beith:** I understand that the relevant Departments of the House have no plans to do so.

**Mr. Skinner:** It is a scandal that some of the lowest paid people in this building—canteen workers—have to clock on, while Ministers are carted in chauffeur-driven cars in order to come here to vote. Those canteen workers earn £100 a week, and they can lose £7 a time for being a few minutes late. At night when they knock off, if the House finishes straight after a 10 o'clock vote those people, many of them women, are turned out without a chance to go home in a taxi while Ministers are carted from one oak-panelled study to the next. The Government talk about a classless society and we have citizens charters coming out of every Minister's earholes, yet those people are treated like chattels. Get something done!

**Mr. Beith:** The time recording system is necessary to establish overtime payments correctly and it is used by every member of the Refreshment Department up to and including the Director of Catering.

**Mr. Skinner:** The lowest paid.

**Mr. Beith:** The hon. Gentleman gives a misleading account of the rates of pay provided. He should also take account of the fact that transport is provided for late sittings of the House——

**Mr. Skinner:** Not at 10 o'clock.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked his question. Let us hear Mr. Beith.

**Mr. Beith:** I know of no representations from unions representing the staff that the system of time recording should be abolished.

### Members and Staff (Working Conditions)

32. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what assessment the Commission has made of the implications of the recommendation in the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House for working conditions of hon. Members and staff.

**Mr. Beith:** The Commission has made no assessment of the possible implications of the report on the sittings of the House because of its responsibility to ensure that appropriate staffing arrangements are made to accommodate whatever hours of sitting the House may determine.

**Mr. Tredinnick:** Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that if the procedures of the House are streamlined and become more efficient, not only Members but staff will benefit as a result of the great reduction in late-night sittings, many of which are deemed by hon. Members to be unnecessary?

**Mr. Beith:** Yes, Madam Speaker. That is my view, but it is for the Commission to provide appropriate staffing arrangements for whatever the House may determine.

**Mr. Bryan Davies:** Will the right hon. Gentleman support the provision of nursery facilities for the children of the workers who support us in this House?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is gazumping a later question. If he rephrases his question so that it refers to sittings of the House, I will hear it.

**Mr. Davies:** My question relates to whatever hours the House works——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. That was not the original question. We must move on now.

### Members' Facilities

33. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans he has to improve facilities in the House to assist hon. Members in the discharge of their duties.

**Mr. Beith:** Responsibility for proposing new facilities for hon. Members rests with the domestic Committees,

which are expected to meet shortly. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the developing plans for the construction of new office accommodation on the phase 2 site and the introduction of a new computer network for Members and their staff. I shall be happy to pass on to the relevant Committees any other suggestions that the hon. Gentleman may have.

**Mr. Bruce:** Has the right hon. Gentleman thought about the possibility of giving hon. Members an option of staff based in the House or more money to provide facilities outside, perhaps in their constituencies? That would take the pressure off existing facilities and allow a much quicker raising of standards for Members and secretaries working together in the House.

**Mr. Beith:** Those matters do not fall within the responsibility of the Commission. The House may hear more about the subject shortly, but not from the Commission.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Agencies

40. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 79, what representations he has received calling for early action to make replies from next steps agencies more accessible to hon. Members and the general public.

**Mr. Newton:** I have not received any further representations. The House authorities have received our proposals for publishing agency chief executives' replies. We remain hopeful that the House will take an early decision, now that the Administration Committee has been reconstituted.

**Mr. Flynn:** Representations from 208 hon. Members are contained in early-day motion 1. Is it not a continuing disgrace that the increasing number of answers from next steps agencies are not readily accessible, except in this marvellous publication produced by my office and the Rowntree trust? Cannot the right hon. Gentleman ensure that we return to the previous system, whereby traditionally Ministers answered questions for their areas of responsibility, and those then appeared automatically in *Hansard*. Is not the Government's commitment to sweeping away the cobwebs of secrecy gossamer-thin?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to agree with the latter part of his remarks. As for his gesture in waving at me his excellent document, "Open Lines", I thought that he was going to complain about our nationalisation proposals in that respect. As he knows, we have proposed to the appropriate Committee that the reply should be published in a way that would be more convenient to the House and the public. I hope that an early decision will be made on that proposal and that it will be the clearest demonstration that there is no thought of trying to conceal useful information from those who should have it.

### Working Conditions

41. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to report on the question of hours and working conditions in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Newton:** I intend to arrange a debate on the report on the Select Committee on Sittings of the House before the House rises for the summer recess.

**Mr. Skinner:** If the Government got rid of moonlighting in this gentlemen's club—250 Tory Members in the last Parliament had more than 500 moonlighting jobs between them—we could start talking about changing our hours. Is not the real reason why Parliament does not start until 2.30 pm so that Tory Members can make money in the law courts and board rooms and then turn up later? If the Government want to improve facilities, would it not be a good idea to use the Robing Room as a nursery and change the Royal Gallery into a cafeteria for visitors? If the royal family keeps pushing the self-destruct button, we shall get it.

**Mr. Newton:** Once again, the hon. Gentleman has enlivened our proceedings. I shall confine my comments, for the time being, to the more mundane business of looking at the recommendations of the Jopling report.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Will the European Community's working time directive apply to the working of the House?

**Mr. Newton:** As there is no such thing as a working time directive at present—at least, not an agreed one—I am not in a position to judge.

### Office Costs Allowance

42. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to announce the results of the review of the office costs allowance; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** Before the summer recess.

**Mr. Mullin:** Is the Lord President aware that a number of unscrupulous newspapers, not least that fascist rag *The Sun*, have been seeking to pretend that the office costs allowance is merely an extension of our salaries? Is he aware that many of us, particularly those who operate offices in their constituencies, subsidise the office costs allowance from our own pockets? Will he make it clear in the House today that, whatever view the Government take on the final figures, this is an argument about the quality of service that we can provide for our constituents?

**Mr. Newton:** Without endorsing the language that the hon. Gentleman used, which came close to being as colourful as that of his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I would certainly endorse the general proposition that there is a clear distinction to be drawn between the salaries of Members of Parliament and the amounts that they are paid to acquire the necessary assistance to do the job that the public expect of them.

**Mrs. Currie:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there are Members of this House with about 40,000 constituents and Members of this House with more than 80,000 constituents, often scattered across large areas of the countryside while the allowance that we receive to serve our constituents is identical? That means that many

Conservative Members also have to subsidise the allowances to a substantial degree. Does my right hon. Friend also agree that it is disgraceful for some of our newspapers to imply that Members who employ members of their families, particularly their wives, as secretaries, should do so for nothing and expect those women to work for nothing at all?

**Mr. Newton:** I certainly agree that the distinction to which I referred in response to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) and which my hon. Friend has also drawn should be taken into account by those who comment on these matters. As for the earlier part of her question, I acknowledge some of the problems caused to Members on both sides—my hon. Friend may be right to think that the problem applies particularly to Conservative Members—by disparities in the size of their constituencies. It would be a good deal easier to tackle them through the action that we are taking over the boundary commission than to attempt to devise some allowance related to the size of constituencies.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** Should we not expect but also set aside the more misleading statements from some of our national newspapers about the allowances paid to Members to employ people the more effectively to represent their constituents? Will not the Leader of the House and his Cabinet colleagues accept that the longer they put off this decision the more likely it is that the groundswell of misleading innuendo and abuse of Members of Parliament will grow? Why does he not take the decision now and get on with it?

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question. I assure him that there is no desire unnecessarily to prolong this matter, but, as he will see in due course, this is a complicated and substantial report and it is right to look at it carefully before bringing it to the House.

## Select Committees

43. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he is taking to speed up the nomination of Select Committees.

**Mr. Newton:** We are making good progress with the setting up of Select Committees with, for example, the Public Accounts Committee, the European Scrutiny Committee and the four domestic Committees already reconstituted. I hope that we shall have the remainder of the Committees—that is, the departmental Committees—in place after tomorrow's debate on the motion that I have tabled in that respect.

**Mr. Alton:** I welcome that news, but can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that nominations for the departmental Select Committees will be placed before the Committee of Selection on Wednesday and that the most senior members of those Committees can then convene meetings, so that the Committees can meet at least before the House rises for the summer recess?

**Mr. Newton:** My understanding is that the usual way of proceeding after nominations by the Committee of Selection is that the senior members call meetings—but the timing of the recommendations by the Committee of Selection is a matter not for me but for the Committee.

## London Question Time

44. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to institute a Question Time for London; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Newton:** I have no specific proposals for a separate Question Time for London, but hon. Members representing London constituencies can, of course, ask questions of relevance to London to any of the Departments of State.

**Mr. Greenway:** I appreciate my right hon. Friend's reply, but will he accept that London has a special interest for the nation? London has 84 Members of Parliament. Northern Ireland has 17, Wales has 32 and Scotland has 72. The latter all have their own Question Times, so why should not there be a Question Time for London which takes account of the special problems and opportunities of London?

**Mr. Newton:** I do not think that it would be appropriate to move in quite the way that my hon. Friend suggests—unless there were a Minister for London, which I understand that my hon. Friend does not support, although I hope that he has not been misrepresented to me in that respect. My hon. Friend shows considerable and commendable ingenuity in putting questions about London in a variety of ways—most recently, as I heard for myself, during today's transport questions. I hope that that is of some comfort to him.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** As an alternative to that, when the Leader of the House has completed his review of a programme for parliamentary business throughout the year, so that we shall have notice of what is to happen, could he formalise the occasional London debate so that, first, it is agreed that there will be an annual London debate and, secondly, we know roughly when it is to take place?

**Mr. Newton:** This is turning into something like business questions, but that is fair enough. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would expect me to answer his question on the hoof, but I will certainly bear it in mind.

# European Council (Lisbon)

3.30 pm

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** With permission, Madam Speaker, I shall make a statement about last week's European Council which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

The conclusions of the European Council have been placed in the Library. The meeting took place on the eve of our presidency of the Community and dealt with a range of issues which the United Kingdom will now carry forward. These include preparations for enlargement, the future financing of the Community, the issue of subsidiarity and the Uruguay round. We also discussed the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia. We agreed to reappoint the President of the Commission for two years. Thereafter, a new five-year appointment will be made of the whole Commission.

On enlargement, we secured agreement that work should start immediately on the negotiating mandates for the EFTA countries which have applied to join the Community—Austria, Sweden, Finland and Switzerland in the first instance. Much of the ground work has already been done. I hope that we can agree negotiating mandates by the end of our presidency, so that formal negotiations can start at the beginning of next year. The Community has also agreed to step up its dialogue with the countries of central and eastern Europe in preparation for their membership. We plan to hold a meeting with the Visegrad three at Head of Government level during the presidency.

The Council also discussed the future financing of the Community. There was widespread recognition that the existing ceiling for the Community's budget will be adequate for at least the next two years. The agreed language in the communiqué on help for the poorer countries of the Community reinforces that view. It makes no commitment to the doubling of resources that the Commission had proposed.

All Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to the Maastricht treaty. At Maastricht we won agreement to the principle of subsidiarity and its inclusion in the treaty. At this meeting, we have taken that a stage further. Under our presidency work will go ahead on how to turn that general principle into reality in the working practices of the Community. The steps immediately envisaged include: rigorous scrutiny within the Commission on whether new proposals are necessary—any such proposals must be justified—and examination of existing legislation to see whether it could be modified or even scrapped. The Commission and the Council will report to our European Council in Edinburgh on progress made.

The European Council reaffirmed its commitment to negotiating a successful conclusion of the Uruguay round. The remaining gap between the European Community and the United States on agriculture issues is narrow. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has calculated that a GATT settlement would give a boost to world growth worth $195 billion annually in extra world income. Over $90 billion of that would go to developing countries and former communist countries. I hope that those of our partners who are still hesitating about an agreement will reflect on the enormous advantages of success and the price of failure.

We also discussed the deteriorating situation in Yugoslavia. I proposed that all member states should make an immediate pledge of aircraft and transport personnel for the Sarajevo humanitarian airlift; that, with the help of the Commission, we should start to assemble humanitarian material at a suitable base now; and that we should demonstrate our condemnation of Serbian actions by not allowing Serbia to have part in any international organisations, including the CSCE.

With the Security Council about to meet, we agreed not to rule out the use of military means by the United Nations to achieve our humanitarian objectives. However, the United Nations has rightly been cautious about organising humanitarian operations in the absence of an effective ceasefire, and about trying to interpose itself in a civil war.

During the course of the weekend we have had discussions with the United States, the United Nations secretariat and others. The prospects for a ceasefire and for a humanitarian mission look slightly better than they did 48 hours ago, but the Serbian militia and others are numerous and well-armed. It would take only one ground-launched missile to cause serious loss of life. We stand ready to take part in a humanitarian airlift but will want to be sure that it can happen with the minimum risk to British and other lives.

We adopted conclusions on a number of other foreign policy issues. These are attached to the conclusions which are in the Library of the House. I draw the House's attention in particular to the statement on nuclear safety in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Community has committed itself to increase its help for improving the safety of nuclear power plants. Britain has taken a lead on this issue and will be seeking a co-ordinated initiative at the economic summit next week.

I also draw the House's attention to the statement on Southern Africa, which calls on all the parties to resume negotiations in CODESA. We continue to be in close touch with the South African Government and the ANC on this.

Many of the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council constitute the agenda for the British Presidency, which starts on Wednesday. They are a huge challenge for the Community and a great responsibility for the United Kingdom.

All the issues on which I have reported to the House —subsidiarity, enlargement, future financing, the GATT round—will fall to us to manage and, we hope, to bring to a successful conclusion. Yugoslavia too will be very high on our agenda. Many difficult matters must be resolved in the months ahead.

The plain fact is that the future of Europe is at stake and it needs to be addressed with coolness, commitment, and with careful calculation.

**Mr. Neil Kinnock** (Islwyn): I begin by commending President Mitterand's initiative in going to Sarajevo. I hope that the action taken by the French President and the statement made by the Lisbon Council will have the effect, at the very least, of enabling humanitarian aid to be delivered, and maintained when it is delivered, to the wretched people of the area around Sarajevo.

We support the emphasis placed by the Lisbon summit on ensuring that any action taken in relation to the former Yugoslavia must be on the basis of agreed United Nations Security Council resolutions. Will the Prime Minister ensure that our country plays a full part both in providing

humanitarian aid and in efforts to ensure the strongest possible United Nations stance against the continuing bloodshed and misery in what was formerly Yugoslavia?

The Lisbon summit made the beginning of formal negotiations about the enlargement of the European Community conditional upon achievement of agreement on the Delors 2 package. Given that precondition, how does the Prime Minister intend to pursue what he described as his highest priority of enlargement when he is opposed to Delors 2 or anything close to it? Remembering that it is not enough now to satisfy the condition of ratification of Maastricht but that he has also to gain agreement on Delors 2, how does the Prime Minister believe that he can go ahead with promotion of enlargement without the satisfaction of both of those preconditions?

We note with satisfaction that the Heads of Government at Lisbon urged member countries, in the words of the communiqué, to

"pursue efforts in the social field as the necessary complement to the realisation of the Internal Market."

The Prime Minister agreed to that section of the communiqué, but does it faithfully reflect his Government's attitude to the social dimension when they refuse to adopt the social chapter and resist application of the social charter? Is there not an inconsistency between the Prime Minister's words in the communiqué from Lisbon and his actions in opposing the social dimension?

In view of the decision, made at Lisbon, to increase substantially the resources devoted to actions in the context of common external policy, can the Prime Minister tell us what the substantial increase will be and what will be the basis for its calculation and the mechanism for its use?

On the question of subsidiarity, is the Prime Minister aware that no one can sensibly argue against the democratic principle that relevant and accountable powers should be exercised at national, regional and local levels of government? So, as he takes up the presidency of the European Council this week, can the Prime Minister tell us the main components of his concept of subsidiarity and how he would expect it to work in practice? Can he, for instance, tell us what emphasis he would put on achieving safeguards against some member countries' lowering environmental standards, or following unfair industrial or economic policies, or reducing social and employment conditions and encouraging social dumping? I have no particular country in mind at this juncture, but we should be interested to hear the Prime Minister on the subject.

May I express surprise and disappointment that no time appears to have been given at the Lisbon summit to discussion of rising unemployment in the Community? Since Britain, under the present Government, has by far the fastest rising rate of unemployment in the Community, does not the Prime Minister think that he should have taken the lead in promoting such a discussion and in advancing proposals for co-ordinated action to combat the rise in joblessness? Will he give us now an undertaking that he will not allow any future summit to go by without ensuring that unemployment and the means of combating it are included on the agenda?

Finally, since the Lisbon summit has not really provided any further clarification of the political and legal status of the Maastricht treaty, following the Danish referendum result, is the Secretary of State yet in a position to say what form of report he will put to the House before there is any proposal to return to consideration of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for some of his earlier comments, and I agree with his remarks about the courage and vision of President Mitterrand's visit to Sarajevo. It was an excellent initiative, and I thoroughly commend it. On that subject, I should say that General MacKenzie, the chief officer of UN forces in Sarajevo, has recommended within the last couple of hours that the United Nations should take control of Sarajevo airport on the basis of assurances he has received from the Serbs. We shall need to see if those assurances are matched by others—notably the Muslims, who were shelling Sarajevo over the weekend while President Mitterrand was there. But the development clearly improves the prospects of the United Nations humanitarian mission, and I thoroughly welcome it.

On the question of enlargement, the condition to which the right hon. Gentleman referred is one that was set at Maastricht some time earlier. We propose to proceed by preparing the Community mandates, which must be prepared prior to the opening of formal negotiations between now and the Edinburgh summit. The target and the expectation are that we shall be able at that summit to reach agreement on future financing. The way would then be open for us to continue negotiations with the EFTA countries on a more formal basis.

With regard to some of the areas of substantially increased expenditure, one of which relates to the increased expenditure that will undoubtedly be necesssary in the Community and beyond to assist countries in eastern Europe to deal with the very difficult problem of their nuclear establishments, the Community has committed a substantial sum—from memory, I think, 150 million ecu thus far. Clearly, there will need to be further commitments, and it is impossible at this stage to know precisely how far we shall need to go. This is largely because we do not yet know what contributions might come from the United States, from Japan, from Canada, and perhaps from other sources. I anticipate that that will be discussed further at the Munich summit in a few days' time.

As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we agree with the social dimension, but we do not agree with the social charter itself. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the difference?"] If hon. Members understood the difference, they would understand the point of that. The present treaty allows adequate progress on social issues. Twenty-five of the 38 measures tabled under the social action programme have been agreed—including measures on health and safety, the free movement of labour, training practice, equal opportunities and employee rights. The United Kingdom has not blocked a single proposal under the social action programme.

On the point about subsidiarity, we agreed at the summit to examine in detail how we turn the principle into a working, living practice within the Community, with examples during the period of the British presidency. There are areas in the Community where subsidiarity is not appropriate, and we should recognise that.

If we wish to have a single market with a level playing field, as we have frequently said in the House in recent years, there is a need for some action at a Community level. What we are saying about subsidiarity is that, where

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there is unnecessary intrusion, it must cease. We were no longer alone in our pleas for that at the European Council; we were joined by a number of other member states.

On the question of employment, and as a straight matter of fact, the unemployment rate is rising faster in Spain than it is in Britain. Nevertheless, it is rising faster here than we would wish. The point about GATT, is that the growth in trade would especially help with the problem of unemployment, not just in this country but in a number of other countries. Unemployment was mentioned in that context at the summit, but not as a specific subject.

The right hon. Gentleman's final question related to the political and legal status of Maastricht. It is too soon to decide in what form we will report to the House. We will be having the routine six-monthly debate on Europe later this week. That is separate from the debate promised by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, which will be held at a later stage when we have a clearer indication, most notably from the Danes, of how Denmark proposes to deal with its problem.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Now that we have had the opening statement and questions, may I seek the co-operation of hon. Members' Many hon. Members wish to put questions to the Prime Minister, but that can be achieved only if each Member puts just one question, and does so briskly—and, please, if the Prime Minister gives a brisk reply.

**Mr. Terence L. Higgins** (Worthing): Is my right hon. Friend aware that no renegotiation of the Maastricht treaty is likely to produce more favourable terms for the United Kingdom than those that he has already achieved? However, if we are to protect the principle of subsidiarity, some renegotiation of the Single European Act and the treaty of Rome is needed.

Has my right hon. Friend noted the appalling inconsistency of those who are now advocating a referendum? They did not do so when we joined the Community, they voted against one subsequently, and they certainly did not suggest one when they were forcing the Single European Act through the House.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I agree with what he has said. It has traditionally been the position of the Conservative party that we do not accept referendums. That was our position when my right hon. and noble Friend led the Conservatives into the Lobby in 1975. I recall that she quoted Lord Attlee's view of referendums as a device of demagogues and dictators.

On the question of subsidiarity and the Single European Act, I cannot do better than echo what my right hon. Friend has said.

**Sir David Steel** (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Prime Minister agree with the definition of subsidiarity given by the Danish Foreign Minister—that member Governments should decide what goes up to European Community level, not that the European Commission should decide what comes down to Governments?

In view of the near-hysterical remarks of the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor on television yesterday, will he make it clear that his definition of subsidiarity includes institutional reforms, more openness, more accountability and more decentralisation—and where better to begin than in Edinburgh?

**The Prime Minister:** I am intrigued to hear what the right hon. Gentleman has to say, and I substantially agree with him. I am not entirely sure that the leader of his party agrees with him, but I put that to one side. We must examine all the opportunites for subsidiarity. There is no doubt that there will be different views on that matter within the Community. There is equally no doubt that we shall need to define subsidiarity very carefully because there are areas that would ensure that the Community did not function in any way unless they were dealt with at the European level. The whole House has seen illustrations of that.

**Mr. John Biffen** (Shropshire, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Court of Auditors described the recent MacSharry proposals accepted by the Agriculture Ministers as "a recipe for fraud"? In those curcumstances, is it not clear that the mechanics of administering the common agricultural policy are wholly in disarray? Do they not need the application of subsidiarity to bring about better control? Will every effort be made during my right hon. Friend's presidency of the European Community to establish ways in which the CAP can be recast consistent with his ambitions concerning subsidiarity?

**The Prime Minister:** As my right hon. Friend knows, at Maastricht the Court of Auditors was made a Community institution, so it is now under better control than it was previously. The common agricultural policy has been substantially reformed—a remarkable achievement on the part of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture. We will continue to study whether further improvements can be made. No aspect of Community activities will be ruled out of discussion by us while we review subsidiarity.

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Having returned yesterday from Copenhagen, in that democratic country of Denmark, I assure the Prime Minister that there is not the slightest prospect of the Danish people changing their minds about Maastricht before the end of this year. That being so, what is the point of writing into the opening paragraphs of the communiqué the importance of ratifying the treaty so that it can come into force on 1 January 1993? Is that just hot air, or is it something more sinister—an attempt to override article 236 of the Rome treaty?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman should not see plots where none exists. He makes his own judgment of what may happen in Denmark. We must wait to see what events actually occur there, and what action the Danish Government take—either saying in concrete terms to the Community, "We cannot and we will not ratify the treaty", in which case the treaty cannot proceed; or explaining to us how they intend to proceed with the ratification of the treaty. Once the Danish Government do that, we will be in a position to proceed with the ratification here.

**Mr. Michael Alison** (Selby): As my right hon. Friend charts the course ahead for Maastricht, will he recall that the majority of right hon. and hon. Members—certainly on this side of the House—endorse his vision of Britain at

the heart of Europe? With my right hon. Friend at the heart of Europe, we shall have not a weak heart, a hard heart, or a bleeding heart, but a stout heart—which won my right hon. Friend the last election, and which he shares with his predecessor as Prime Minister. Like him, she won many important improvements to the basis of our membership of the Community.

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my right hon. Friend that, while we remain a member of the European Community, there is no alternative to our being at its centre and exercising influence. It may be the ambition of some to leave the Community, in which case they should say so and make their position entirely clear. If that is their position, they should also explain what would happen, if we left the Community, to inward investment, jobs, prosperity, and much else.

If we are to remain in the Community, it is the overwhelming view of the House—and I believe of the country—that we need to be at its centre, exercising our influence and determining by our own efforts the direction in which the Community goes. I for one am not prepared to see this country sit on the sidelines of the European Community while other countries take decisions that determine its direction and the livelihood of every person in this country.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): The declaration on South Africa rightly drew attention to the dreadful massacre in Boipatong. Does the Prime Minister accept, however, that simply asking the people to back the Conference for a Democratic South Africa is a weak response? Is it not time for a fundamental reappraisal of policy on South Africa, to compel President de Klerk to negotiate in a genuine fashion?

**The Prime Minister:** My understanding is that President de Klerk is prepared to negotiate, and we want negotiations to start again. In the context of what is now happening in South Africa, it is not helpful for all kinds of miscellaneous advice to appear suddenly and gratuitously, spreading the blame on one side or the other. What we need is a resumption of the talks as soon as possible.

It is all right for some to hawk their consciences around, but the impact of what happens in South Africa affects the people who are poorest. South Africa has 40 per cent. unemployment, 2 per cent. population growth and 0 per cent. growth in gross domestic product. That will not be corrected until the talks are successful, and those who sit here thinking otherwise had better examine the situation with greater care.

**Mr. Richard Shepherd** (Aldridge-Brownhills): How does my right hon. Friend reconcile what I think the country wants—a return of powers from Brussels to Britain—with his insistence that we go ahead and legislate for the dead treaty of union? Why does he not suggest that we withdraw the treaty now, and build on his proposals for the return of powers to Britain?

**The Prime Minister:** As my hon. Friend knows, much in the Maastricht treaty moves in the direction in which he would have the country go. It is perfectly true that both the Maastricht treaty and the Single European Act involved institutional changes; but at Maastricht, for the first time, we also secured language establishing the value of intergovernmental co-operation outside the treaty of Rome and outside the concept of the European Court of Justice. That was not in the Single European Act, but it is in the Maastricht treaty.

We also secured the formalisation of subsidiarity, on which we are still seeking to put flesh—a test to be applied to all Community competence issues. Let me repeat that: the test will be applied to all Community competence issues. That, too, was not in the Single European Act. The Act does, however, contain many of the things about which my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), and some of my other hon. Friends, now complain.

**Mr. Giles Radice** (Durham, North): What progress did the Government make at Lisbon in ensuring that the Eurofed would be situated in the United Kingdom?

**The Prime Minister:** There was a discussion about sites over dinner, but the hon. Gentleman will be interested to know that no agreement was reached.

**Sir Peter Hordern** (Horsham): One of the good things to come out of the meeting was the failure to accept the European budget proposed by Mr. Delors. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the European Commission will have plenty to do in cleaning up its own house and keeping an eye on the amount of fraud that is now taking place in the Community? Will not the proposals for a new parliamentary commission of the European Parliament, under the provisions of Maastricht, help in that process, and do not those proposals—and the proposal for subsidiarity—make a very good case for the House to ratify the Maastricht treaty?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I entirely agree with him. There was strong opposition, not just from the United Kingdom but from a number of European states, to the Commission's over-ambitious proposals to increase own resources to 1·37 per cent. of gross national product by 1997. I am certain that those proposals will be rejected, and equally certain that there will be no increase in the 1·2 per cent. ceiling, at least until 1995.

Other options were discussed, including a longer period for the future own-resources perspective—perhaps seven years instead of five. A range of views was expressed in a lengthy discussion at Lisbon. The matter will need to be determined over the next six month, but we are clear about the fact that there is now plenty of room within the existing ceiling without an increase in own resources.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): If the Prime Minister lost Maastricht in the House, would he consider resigning?

**The Prime Minister:** We shall not be losing it in the House.

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be more than a little perverse for anyone concerned with national sovereignty to promote in one Parliament the Single European Act that made no provision for subsidiarity and in the next Parliament to attack the Maastricht treaty, which does include subsidiarity, as "a treaty too far"?

**The Prime Minister:** I think I am able to agree with my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): In the context of subsidiarity, did the Prime Minister discuss how to counteract the centralised and bumbling bureaucracy that is the British Board of Trade, which has delayed RECHAR for far too long already? Did the Prime Minister go on to say that he would put that down to local government to implement?

**The Prime Minister:** Stressing more control over British institutions is hardly subsidiarity.

**Mr. Michael Colvin** (Romsey and Waterside): With regard to the level playing field that my right hon. Friend mentioned, does he acknowledge that, both at Maastricht and at Lisbon, he managed to move the goal posts in favour of Britain without upsetting our European partners, to the extent that they now believe that it was they who invented subsidiarity? Must that not bode well for Britain's presidency, when we shall be able to set the agenda for future meetings?

**The Prime Minister:** It is perfectly clear that the principle of devolving—"subsidiarity" is, we can all agree, an ugly word—means ensuring that we have a less intrusive Community and making sure that as much as is appropriate is done at the national rather than the European level. That means that the test should be that, if it cannot be done at the national level, perhaps it should be done at the European level. If it can be done best at the national level, it should be done at the national level.

**Mr. Denzil Davies** (Llanelli): Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the concept of subsidiarity that he is particularly fond of will be applied to the heart of the Maastricht treaty—that is, to economic and monetary union?

**The Prime Minister:** As the right hon. Gentleman knows, that is a decision for this House, and it will be placed before this House. Whether we go into economic and monetary union, a concept well understood in this House, will be determined by this House at an appropriate time.

**Mr. George Walden** (Buckingham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, every time the word "subsidiarity" is used in this House, we lose 99 per cent. of the audience outside, who are confused and apprehensive about its meaning? As someone who is confused and apprehensive about its meaning, I would encourage my right hon. Friend to fight for a legally binding clarification of the Maastricht treaty so that we can understand what it means.

In order to dispel the confusion and apprehension about the treaty itself, I would also suggest that my right hon. Friend should keep an open mind to a referendum on any entry into a single currency which may come about, as that is a very clear, specific and momentous issue—by far the most important part of the Maastricht treaty. Whereas I agree with my right hon. Friend that there is no case for——

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Walden:** I am just finishing, Madam Speaker.

Whereas I agree with my right hon. Friend that there is no case for a referendum on the present treaty, should there ever be any question of entry into economic and monetary union, the people must have a say on that very specific and very momentous issue.

**The Prime Minister:** Subsidiarity is already a legally binding issue under article 3b of the treaty. What we are seeking to do is to set out how in practice that will work, rather than simply waiting for cases to go to the European Court of Justice and for rulings at that stage. The concept of making it legally binding is already there in the Maastricht treaty. I repeat what I said a moment ago about economic and monetary union: I believe that that is a matter for Parliament and for a future Parliament.

**Mr. Dennis Canavan** (Falkirk, West): In view of the need for a more considered response to the baronial intervention by his predecessor, who called for a referendum on the treaty of Maastricht, does the Prime Minister not realise that he could probably keep most people happy by agreeing to hold a referendum in return for agreeing to implement the suggestion by the Tory chairman of the European Movement: that he should appoint Baroness Thatcher as Governor of the Falkland islands and dispatch her there forthwith?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that we already have a governor.

**Mr. Peter Temple-Morris** (Leominster): Does my right hon. Friend further accept that now is the time to build on and to consolidate the achievements of Maastricht rather than constantly to carp and criticise, which some people are all too inclined to do? On the question of subsidiarity, may I impress on my right hon. Friend the urgent need to get a position out of the Commission and a decision out of the Council as soon as possible—preferably under his leadership during the British presidency?

**The Prime Minister:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend on the latter point. That is precisely the remit that we have obtained. Equally, he is correct on his former point.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): On an issue that is so vital to the sovereignty of our country, why is the Prime Minister so reluctant to allow a free vote on this side of the House? Is the reason because he is fearful of—*[Laughter]*.

**The Prime Minister:** If the hon. Gentleman wants a free vote on that side of the House, he had better discuss that matter with the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster).

**Sir Anthony Grant** (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On the question of a referendum, does my right hon. Friend recall that his predecessor, in opposing a referendum in 1975, not only prayed in aid the dictum of Lord Attlee but argued strongly that a referendum was contrary to parliamentary sovereignty?

**The Prime Minister:** I did not have the privilege of being here on that occasion, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing it to my attention.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): In considering the potential for the enlargement of the Community—a goal that many of us believe is not only desirable but achievable—will the Prime Minister advise us whether the Council considered that additional protocols pertaining to

accession to the European Community will be written into the Maastricht accord, and, if so, will they be based solely on economic criteria or will other factors come into play?

**The Prime Minister:** No, that point was not discussed in the enlargement discussions. What was discussed was the method of preparing the mandates immediately for the Eftans and the position to be taken in respect of other countries—most notably the Visegrad countries—such as Turkey, Malta and Cyprus that have expressed interest in joining the Community. We are proposing to take all those matters forward in different ways. We must wait and see how that turns out for Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, or perhaps the Czech Lands and Slovakia. I hope that we will have a meeting between the presidency and those countries later in the year. It will clearly be many years before they are ready to become full members.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** (East Lindsey): Did my right hon. Friend remind his fellow Heads of Government in Lisbon of the historic fact that, during the 1939-45 war, the Germans had to keep nine divisions in Yugoslavia, six of which were in Serbia alone, and yet still were able to maintain control of only the main roads? Comforting talk about humanitarian aid, attractive as it seems when one sees the appalling scenes in Sarajevo, should not blind any of us to the grim reality that we can hope to restore order in that part of the world only with a massive military intervention, which would inevitably lead to large-scale casualties.

**The Prime Minister:** I think that that point was very much in the minds of a number of us in the discussions that we had on Yugoslavia. Although concern predominantly is centering on getting humanitarian aid into Sarajevo airport, unless there is a ceasefire that is likely to be an extremely hazardous and difficult operation. But even if the humanitarian aid arrives in the airport, that is not the end of the matter; it will then have to be taken, presumably by the Red Cross, to areas where it is needed, and military escorts may be needed to safeguard the position of the Red Cross. This is an extremely difficult and hazardous undertaking and it is being discussed by the United Nations—I believe, even as we speak.

**Mr. David Alton** (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Notwithstanding the difficulty of putting large numbers of troops on the ground, does the Prime Minister agree that the establishment of a sky sheild—an area free from bombardment for civilians—would be one way of trying to save lives? Would not he like to see an extension of his idea of safe havens for the Kurds? Will he discuss that with his European colleagues? Did President Mitterrand discuss his visit to Sarajevo with the Prime Minister before he left?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that he discussed it with none of the other Heads of Government, as far as I am aware, before he left. I am certainly not aware that he did so.

The idea of air cover is certainly one that has been considered. It is, of course, extremely hazardous. The bombing and mortaring of people in and around Sarajevo is being done from the land, not from the air, so air cover would not necessarily prevent it. However, air cover would be a juicy target for missiles from the ground if anyone were tempted to aim at them. It is an extremely difficult proposition. Of course, we also considered the prospect of an air drop of supplies, but that also has great logistical difficulties, and we were not advised to proceed with that course.

**Mr. Nicholas Budgen** (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will the Prime Minister confirm that the agreement on European money was a mere holding operation? Will he also confirm that, if there has to be a continuance of a fixed exchange rate moving towards a single currency, it demands convergence, and that convergence in its turn demands the free movement of people—namely, the abolition of all immigration controls within the European Community and a massive increase in regional and social funds?

**The Prime Minister:** If my hon. Friend believes all that, I can understand why he is so opposed to it. I do not believe all that. As for it being a mere holding operation, it was an agreement that there was no agreement to be had. We and others could not agree the proposals put forward at the weekend, and we must now discuss them to see whether agreement can be reached by the time of Edinburgh. That is the way one normally reaches an agreement—through negotiation over time.

**Mr. John McAllion** (Dundee, East): Since the Prime Minister now claims to champion the principle of subsidiarity, will he explain to the House why he does so so enthusiastically for the United Kingdom within the European union while ignoring it completely for Scotland within the British Union?

**The Prime Minister:** We are a single united kingdom.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockton, South): Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that it has taken this country about 50 years to be accepted as a leading player in the European Community? Is it not sad that, on the very eve of our taking the presidency, in our best position for years, with the twin themes of subsidiarity and enlargement on our lips as we do so, there are still those among us who wish to hark back to the glorious days of Britain's history which are no longer relevant in the late 1990s?

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I think that there are very few Conservative Members and, I suspect, very few—if any—hon. Members who want to see a centralised European Community and the nightmare prospect proposed by some of a central European state. We do not want it, it will not happen and it is an unreal prospect—the stuff of nightmares for a few people—but if we wish to build the sort of Europe that this House wants, we can do so only if we play a full part in the decision-making process and do not, by our own actions, marginalise ourselves on areas of discussion where decisions need to be taken now.

**Mr. Gerald Bermingham** (St. Helens, South): Will the Prime Minister explain, if he believes in honest negotiation, on what basis he will negotiate with the four applicants, Switzerland, Finland and so on—on the basis of Maastricht being agreed or on the basis of Maastricht not being agreed? If it is the former, why does he not have the courage to put the Bill before the House now, or is he merely playing for time?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman clearly was not listening earlier. The preparation of the mandates is on the basis of Maastricht being agreed. That is the working

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assumption under which all the negotiations will take place. In due course, when Maastricht is agreed, the official negotiations can start. It is quite possible that not only the mandates but unofficial discussions towards accession to the Community can take place before ratification of the treaty, but the formal accession of any new state could not take place until after the Maastricht treaty is ratified.

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the whole House would wish to thank him and his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—the whole House—for pointing out the dangers of the situation in Yugoslavia? He has made it clear that command and control in Yugoslavia is vested in the United Nations. During the months of the presidency, will my right hon. Friend ensure that that is made clear to every member of the Community? We are all working in the same army for the same aim, but under one single command and control.

**The Prime Minister:** I will seek to make that clear. As my hon. Friend said, we may not carry the whole House with us, but perhaps we carry the whole of the thinking part of the House with us.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): While, Muggins-like, Britain goes along with sanctions against Libya, the Italians cheerfully turn a blind eye to their relations with Libya and to any obligations they have given. What consideration is the Prime Minister giving to the letter from Mr. John Lace, the managing director of Babcock and Wilcox, who argues that thousands of jobs may be involved in various propositions from the British engineering industry in Libya? Why should we lose out on them when our partners are not keeping to any agreements that may have been made?

**The Prime Minister:** Without necessarily accepting the premise on which the hon. Gentleman launched his question, I have seen the letter from Babcock and Wilcox to which he refers. I will take the opportunity to discuss that with the new Italian Prime Minister, Mr. Amato, when I meet him at Munich in a few days' time.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): Given that the people of this country have no faith or confidence whatever in the pocket Napoleon who has been running the Commission for the past eight years, is it not insensitive, to say the least, for our European colleagues to force him on us for the next two years? Or is Machiavelli at work—are they trying to ensure that the British people throw out the wretched treaty with the referendum which is becoming increasingly desirable, necessary and relevant?

**The Prime Minister:** There was only one candidate for the presidency of the Commission. There was no other candidate around who was credible and who would have been likely to have the support of any other nation state at the summit. It would have been perfectly possible, if we had thought it desirable, for us to put forward a different candidate. He—[HON. MEMBERS: "Or she."]—or she would have had no prospect of success, and he or she would have needed to be an existing member of the Commission. There is no point is getting out of the frying pan and stepping straight into the fire.

**Mr. Stuart Bell** (Middlesbrough): The House will have noticed the Prime Minister's reply to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition in relation to unemployment. Will he not accept that it is hardly any solace for those losing their jobs to learn that the rate of unemployment is rising faster in Spain than it is here, or that the only Government proposal to bring down unemployment is the successful conclusion to the GATT round? As the presidency begins on 1 July, will the Prime Minister give the House a categorical assurance that he will make the fall of unemployment a high priority within the exchange rate mechanism?

**The Prime Minister:** I am not quite sure what that last point means. I simply corrected the point of fact made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I also made the point, if I remember accurately, that I did not necessarily suggest that we had unemployment rising at the rate we would like. Clearly we would like to see it fall; I do not deny that for a moment. I was correcting the simple factual point about unemployment. Although it is an important matter, it falls within a wide parameter of policies. It is not necessarily a matter that can be determined by Europewide policies at a European Council meeting.

**Mr. Ray Whitney** (Wycombe): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that his exchanges with his colleagues at Lisbon further demonstrated that there is growing support throughout Europe for the concept of a Community which is effective and united, but which is not unnecessarily centralist?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend has defined precisely the sense of the meeting at Lisbon on Friday and Saturday. There is a strong feeling, not just among politicians, people in this country and people in Denmark, but in a number of other countries, against excessive centralisation. That was reflected in our debates in Lisbon.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): The Prime Minister has told us that he is seeking a definition of subsidiarity. Does he agree that such a definition should be inserted in article 3b? Contrary to popular belief, it is not yet there. Does he agree that, to make it a practical reality and to make it justiciable, as it must be in the end, there must be some suggestion of a separation of powers? However, is not the separation of powers the hallmark of a federal constitution, which the Prime Minister says he wishes to avoid?

**The Prime Minister:** The definition is there in article 3b, as I said earlier. It is therefore justiciable, and I am happy to confirm that again to the hon. Gentleman. We have the definition. We are seeking to put flesh, in practical working terms, on the definition that already exists and is already justiciable.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the one thing that my constituents are very clear about is that they do not want to see the surrender of any more important powers by the Westminster Parliament to the European Community? If that is what we mean by subsidiarity, is it not time that it was better and more clearly defined, so that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will take the British people with him at the end of his successful presidency?

**The Prime Minister:** As I said a little earlier, I share my hon. and learned Friend's implicit view that "subsidiarity"

is not a very attractive term. We need to find a way of expressing it that will make it readily understood by people up and down the country so that they are aware of what it means and how it will operate. I am open to any helpful proposals on that point, but we shall be considering it further.

**Mr. Peter Hain** (Neath): When the Prime Minister bullied the Baroness Thatcher into signing the exchange rate mechanism or the European monetary system, did she insist to him then, as she did yesterday, that the pound was set at far too high a level?

**The Prime Minister:** I can only assume that the hon. Gentleman has not met my noble Friend.

**Mr. William Powell** (Corby): The emphasis that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister laid upon the successful conclusion of the GATT round is most welcome. Does he agree that nothing would give the world economy a greater boost or boost confidence as well as economic activity than the successful conclusion of the GATT round? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend urge the French President to show the same generosity in solving the GATT problems as he is showing in trying to solve the difficulties in Sarajevo, by reaching a satisfactory compromise over 300,000 tonnes of grain?

**The Prime Minister:** That is an extremely fair point, which has not been lost upon the European leaders. The point has been made to those holding up the agreement at present. Quite apart from the growth of world trade that would follow and apart from the helpful effect that that would also have on unemployment, it would be an immense help to the developing countries and the less-developed countries to have a GATT agreement that opens the richer markets of the west to those countries. There is no point in us handing out sums of aid with one hand and effectively taking them away with closed markets with the other.

**Mr. Robert N. Wareing** (Liverpool, West Derby): With regard to Yugoslavia, is the European Community sure that, although the sanctions against Milosevic are justified and may bring about a change in Serbia, they will lead to peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina? Do not Presidents Izetbegovic and Tudjman have some responsibility for what is happening in that part of the world? What pressure is the Community placing on them—or is the even-handed approach by the British Government before 19 January being thrown away in order to achieve concessions on Maastricht?

**The Prime Minister:** There are two points in relation to the important points raised by the hon. Gentleman. First, we are putting pressure on President Tudjman as well. Secondly, we are seeking to persuade the Serbs to assert control over the Serbs in Bosnia. That is the substantive point.

**Mr. Robert Adley** (Christchurch): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his comments in his opening statement about coolness and commitment are widely shared by a high proportion of his colleagues alongside and behind him? Does he agree that the cacophony of inconsistency from down the Corridor is a sign that very rarely are the best wines made with sour grapes?

**The Prime Minister:** We need to look very carefully at precisely how we carry the debate forward. It is critical that we get the right conclusions from the debate and that we ratify a treaty which for the first time begins to turn back a centralising trend which was evident in the treaty of Rome and in the Single European Act, and which became more evident as time passed. We are now in a position to begin to turn that tide back. It would be folly if we were to sideline ourselves when we have an opportunity to achieve that.

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): Further to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), the Prime Minister must have seen weekend reports that, if Maastricht were not ratified by the House, he would resign. I am sure that he agrees that it would be quite wrong to raise the hopes of the British people on the basis of a false premise, but, in view of the right hon. Gentleman's determination to sweep away the cobwebs of government, will he come clean on this matter and tell us whether, if Maastricht is not ratified, he will resign?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman raises his question on a false premise, which is exactly what he said he would not wish to do—it is going to be ratified. As one of my hon. Friends indicated a moment ago, the hon. Gentleman may have overlooked it, but we had the largest single popular vote in the previous election that any Government have ever received.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): While the Prime Minister and our new friend Mr. Jacques Delors may be entirely confident that this matter is going to go through without difficulty and with the free will of members, does he accept that there is an important democratic issue when a Bill is put through without a free vote, without a referendum, and without the people of the country being told what is involved when there is a major surrender or a major passing over of freedom and liberty? If he doubts that, should we not take a message from the sad countries of eastern Europe about the tragedy of forcing people to go into a single centralised state with common citizenship and without frontiers, without being consulted at all? Surely there is a case for at least looking at telling the people and asking their views.

**The Prime Minister:** No one fights more fiercely for parliamentary control in this country than my hon. Friend. With my great respect for him, I find it inconsistent that such a firm advocate of the parliamentary system should also be an advocate of referendums. I believe that the parliamentary system is right. It is the way in which we took through legislation in the past on constitutuional matters. It is the way in which we took through the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act. This Bill has already been debated, before I went to Maastricht and after I came back, for a longer period than that spent discussing the Single European Act, and that is before we enter the Committee stage.

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): In the context of subsidiarity, will the Prime Minister confirm that there is no truth in the rumours that environmental policy is to be repatriated to the nation state and that, instead, in his presidency he will give priority to the creation of a

*[Mr. Win Griffiths]*

European environmental agency to make sure that important, cross-boundary environmental matters are properly tackled?

**The Prime Minister:** It is agreed that there should be a European environmental agency, and it has been for some time. What has not been agreed is where the European environmental agency should be sited. That, too, failed to find itself a matter of agreement over the weekend.

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's dedication to the concept of enlargement of the Community, so that, one day, we will get to the stage at which Europe really means Europe? Is it not clear that a Community of 15 or 20 more states can exist only on the basis of individual agreements and pillars—precisely the sort of Europe envisaged at Maastricht?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes. They have agreed to apply on the basis of the Maastricht treaty being agreed. That opens, of course, the option of intergovernmental agreement, as I said earlier, rather than simply agreement under the treaty of Rome. No doubt, over time as the Community enlarges, there will be further agreements and, no doubt, further institutional change. We must make sure that we are sufficiently influential in the Community to ensure that the institutional change that takes place and the future agreements that may be necessary are agreements and changes of which we approve.

**Mr. Jimmy Boyce** (Rotherham): Would the Prime Minister be kind enough to tell us whether, when he refers to workers' rights, he means an end to the practice of employers unilaterally de-recognising trade unions, reneging on properly negotiated rates of pay and pay rises, and coercing workers into signing new contracts of employment that mean that they have to work longer hours for basic rates of pay?

**The Prime Minister:** None of those matters was discussed over the weekend.

**Sir Michael Marshall** (Arundel): Would my right hon. Friend confirm that the discussions that have taken place about the parliamentary assize, the group of the 12 Parliaments plus the European Parliament, is a process that will be pursued during our presidency? Does my right hon. Friend accept that that should be an added safeguard in the matter of subsidiarity?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, we shall certainly process the prospect of a further meeting of that sort. Agreements between Parliaments, rather than just between members of the European Parliament and individual Governments, is an attractive way to proceed. I do not anticipate a meeting of the assize during the next six months, but we shall do the ground work and preparation for one to take place thereafter.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): The Prime Minister will be aware that his predecessor has called subsidiarity "gobbledegook". Early-day motion 240 gives a more sophisticated analysis of what is wrong with subsidiarity. If subsidiarity is to begin to have a constitutional meaning and legal definition, and is not simply to be determined by the courts in a broad sweep, its definition comes close to the concept of federalism.

**The Prime Minister:** As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have spent some time in the past hour discussing precisely that point and the necessity of ensuring that a proper definition of subsidiarity is more clear-cut to everyone, including the man and woman in the street, than the definition found in article 3b of the treaty.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We must move on.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### PETROCHEMICAL PLANTS (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Oil Related and Petrochemical Plants (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

### HORTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

That the draft Horticultural Development Council (Amendment) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

*Question agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### FOOD PROTECTION

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Dioxins) (England) (No. 2) Order 1992 (S.I., 1992, No. 1274). dated 1st June 1992, a copy of which was laid before this House on 2nd June be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill

New Clause 1—*Pensions (consultation)*—

'. .—Before exercising the powers under section 1 in so far as they affect pensions, and relevant Corporation and the Secretary of State shall consult those members of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme Committee of Management who represent the workforce and the Contributors' Committee Members of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme on the appointment of advisers and shall not appoint any such adviser without their consent.'. —*[Mr. Dobson.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to take the following: New clause 3—*Changes to British Coal Corporation pension schemes*—

'.—Except in the case where the Secretary of State lays before both Houses of Parliament a statement certifying that such change is for the protection of the interests of the members and beneficiaries, no change shall be made to the Mineworkers Pension Scheme of the British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme except by statutory instrument; and such instrument shall be subject to approval by resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

New clause 7—*Pensions (consultation)*—

'.—Before exercising the powers under section 1 in so far as they affect pensions, any relevant Corporation and the Secretary of State shall consult those members of the British Rail Pension Scheme and the British Rail Superannuation Fund committees of management who represent the workforce on the appointment of advisers and shall not appoint any such adviser without their consent.',

New clause 8—*Changes to British Railways Board pension schemes*—

'.—Except in the case where the Secretary of State lays before both Houses of Parliament a statement certifying that such change is for the protection of the interests of the members and beneficiaries, no change shall be made to the British Rail Pension Scheme or the British Rail Superannuation Fund except by statutory instrument; and such instrument shall be subject to approval by resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

New clause 9—*Colliery welfare organisations*—

'.—Before exercising the powers under section 2 in so far as they affect land on buildings owned by, or held in trust for, any Colliery Welfare organisation, any relevant Corporation and the Secretary of State shall consult both the representatives of such Colliery Welfare organisations and the local authority.'

4.33 pm

**Mr. Frank Dobson** (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move, That the new clause be read a Second time.

All the new clauses are about the pensions of people who used to work or still work for British Coal and British Rail. They seek to protect the rights of pensioners and potential pensioners of those companies. The new clauses are, therefore, important to existing pensioners, widows and children who benefit from the pensions, and the substantial number of people who work for British Coal and British Rail and still pay into those pension schemes. In any sensible society, those people should be entitled to feel that their pensions are secure. But they do not feel that they are secure. The House is under an obligation to offer them the protection that they do not have at present.

The Government's record on pensions is literally scandalous. Under the Government, we have proceeded from one scandal to the next. Each time there is a pension scandal, they wring their hands, express concern, promise action and then do nothing. Even on the odd occasion when they do something, their action is too late. It is usually described as closing the stable door after the horse has bolted, although more often these days the horse did not bolt but was stolen from the stable and written off by some pinstriped highwayman from the City of London. Those latter-day Dick Turpins are always one jump ahead of the law enforcement officers and 10 jumps ahead of the law.

We are obliged to try to ensure that the law offers the protection that it has failed to offer to legions of other pensioners. It is about time Parliament took some action on pensions before, not after, a scandal—it is usually known as a spot of intelligent anticipation.

The new clauses are designed to protect the interests of pensioners, to protect their pension funds and to give pensioners and people still paying into the funds some confidence that, in these difficult times, they will get the pensions to which they believe they are entitled.

Pensioners have good reason to be concerned. The British Coal pension funds total more than £12 billion—perhaps 10 times the value that the Government will eventually place on the assets of the company itself. These funds represent different things to different people. To the pensioners and widows they represent their income—the money that pays the bills. To the people working for British Coal or, for that matter, British Rail these pension funds represent their future security.

Two other groups, however, have their eye on these funds. To the potential purchasers of British Coal that £12 billion represent a kitty. If we and the pensioners—not to mention the people running the pension schemes—are not careful these funds will represent swag for the thieving people in the City who have already stolen so much from Britain's pensioners.

Hitherto the Government have merely offered a few assurances. I am sure that Robert Maxwell would have given assurances. So would Barlow Clowes have offered assurances that its investments were sound. I am sure that the people at Belling would have told their employees that their pensions were safe and were not being invested in the company by a circuitous route. I am sure that when Hanson bought Imperial Tobacco it told its pensioners that their pensions were safe. Anyone who believes such assurances now is flying in the face of experience. Assurances are no longer enough.

**Mr. Ian McCartney** (Makerfield): When Hanson was trying to buy Imperial Tobacco the staff did not believe its assurances and went to court to protect themselves.

**Mr. Dobson:** Yes, indeed, but my hon. Friend will agree that they had to go as far as the House of Lords to protect themselves, and that vulnerable groups such as pensioners should not have to do that. It is up to the House of Commons to offer them the protection to which they believe they are entitled and which they deserve.

Even under present law, pensioners and people paying into these schemes are unhappy about what is happening and they see money being taken away from them. The miners pension scheme has funds of more than £6 billion, out of which it has to pay 160,000 pensioners and more than 100,000 widows—and 260,000 other former miners expect to get what are called deferred pensions when they

*[Mr. Dobson]*

are old enough to be entitled to them. There are fewer than 50,000 working miners paying into the scheme. British Coal decided that the fund was in such surplus that some of it could be disposed of. As the fund was set up to benefit pensioners, one might have thought that the first call on the funds would be to increase pensions now or in the future; but that was not British Coal's top priority. It gave itself a contributions holiday, so that it will make no employers' contributions to the miners pension scheme until the year 2001.

That holiday is worth more than £423 million to British Coal. However, it is intended to benefit not British Coal but whoever buys it when it is privatised. All that is legal, all above board, but it is all a loss to the pensioners, because the benefit will be passed to the shareholders of the new company or companies that will own British Coal. No wonder workers and pensioners in the industry want some reassurance about what will happen when privatisation is under way. Our new clauses seek to give workers, pensioners and their representatives some say in the appointment of advisers to the Government and the companies during privatisation.

As we all know, privatisation involves vast numbers of City advisers. If my memory serves me correctly, in one way or another more than 230 companies advised either the Government or the companies on electricity privatisation, and some of them advised both. That advice cost the taxpayer about £230 million. Such investment in advice cannot be justified unless we can be convinced of the propriety, honesty, wit, intelligence and professional competence of those who are getting the money. Who might the pensioners not want looking into their pensions? In view of the recent scandals, pensioners would not want any advice to the Government or the companies from anybody who was involved in any way in the Maxwell pension scandal.

**Mr. Bill Etherington** (Sunderland, North): My hon. Friend speaks about advisers that pensioners might not want. They might not want that outfit masquerading as a trade union, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. That outfit sided with British Coal to ensure a contributions holiday that will last to the turn of the century. I hope that that will never be forgotten.

**Mr. Dobson:** My hon. Friend makes a valid point. Unfortunately, a UDM representative voted with the management on the miners' pension scheme committee in favour of a pension holiday. It was a rather curious decision.

The point to remember about the Maxwell scandal is that Robert Maxwell did not do it all by himself. Money cannot be moved around and in and out of the City and in and out of Liechtenstein or anywhere else without people such as accountants, auditors, banks and merchant banks—and all sorts of people who make their living by movements of money through their institutions—noticing what is going on. They carefully log such movements, because, by and large, they get a percentage of every movement.

The people who noticed such movements of money fall into two categories—those who took part and those who averted their gaze. I do not think that miners or railway workers would want advice from people in either category. Any institutions or persons who did not notice what Maxwell was up to are too stupid and incompetent to advise on the future of miners' pensions or railway staff pensions. Pensions for miners or railway workers should not be left in the hands of those who failed to prevent the pillage of the Maxwell pensioners.

We offered some help to the Government in their pursuit of the missing Maxwell millions. We suggested that they should demand from anyone whom they were considering appointing as an adviser on this matter a certificate from the Secretary of State for Social Security showing that, as the Secretary of State had requested, the certificate holder had done everything in his power to help the Maxwell pensioners get their money back. If the licence holder had any of the money, he would need a certificate to say that he had paid it back. That is known in the business as an incentive and it should be passed into law.

4.45 pm

**Mr. Robert Adley** (Christchurch): There is not much reference to that in the Bill. The hon. Gentleman said, "We offered some help to the Government" for the Maxwell pensioners to get their money back. Will the hon. Gentleman define what he means by "we"? At great cost to itself, the National Westminster bank has decided to return money to the pension funds. Presumably the hon. Gentleman can assure me that the Mr. Maxwell of whom we are speaking was a former Labour Member of Parliament and that the Labour party received money from the Maxwell organisation. When the hon. Gentleman says "we", does he mean the Labour party and, if so, does Labour propose to return that money, however small the total amount, as a gesture of good faith towards the Maxwell pensioners?

**Mr. Dobson** *rose*——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is dwelling unduly on matters relating to a clause that has not been selected.

**Mr. Dobson:** The clause that has not been selected——

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Never mind what she says.

**Hon. Members:** Oh!

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The selection of clauses and amendments is made by Madam Speaker, not by me.

**Mr. Dobson:** I have no intention of dwelling on our new clause which was not selected. I was in the process of moving on before the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) intervened. I do not give a damn which political party Robert Maxwell came from. He was a villain and he stole from pensioners. But he must have done that with the connivance of innumerable City individuals and institutions, because he could not have done it by himself.

**Mr. Skinner:** The Tories are speaking about Maxwell, but one of their clan, Peter Walker, picked up £450,000 for working for three months for a Maxwell organisation and took a Mercedes car worth about £50,000. That happened last year when Maxwell was fiddling the pension funds. Walker should send the money to those desperate Maxwell pensioners. That is what the Tories should be calling for.

**Mr. Dobson:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

The Government recently announced the appointment of Department of Trade and Industry inspectors to investigate, not the Maxwell pension scandal but the flotation of Mirror Group Newspapers. Linklaters and Paines, and Clifford Chance, solicitors; Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, the reporting accountants; Salomon Brothers International, the underwriters; the merchant bankers Samuel Montagu; and stockbrokers Smith New Court were all involved in that flotation, and are all being investigated by DTI inspectors.

The DTI is one of the two sponsoring Ministries behind the Bill. We would expect it to agree with us that none of the companies being investigated by the Department of Trade and Industry should be entitled, while under investigation, to be appointed as advisers to the Government, British Coal or British Rail on this matter of privatisation and in particular on the matter of pensions.

**Mr. Martin Redmond** (Don Valley): Let him without sin cast the first stone. Many Conservative Members have interests in the City and are involved in all sorts of deals that take money from the pockets of those who invest their pounds and 50ps in the City. Is it not correct that the DTI is also involved, in that it was aware that Maxwell was an unfit person but never acted on that knowledge and allowed the robbery of the pensioners to continue?

**Mr. Dobson:** I cannot claim to understand all the detailed ramifications of how deeply the DTI or other Departments were involved in various aspects of the fiddles, but it is fairly unlikely that, in about two decades' time, when the various investigatory machines have finally completed their business, any Department will come out with a clean bill of health. We are pretty sure that it will be a long time before any conclusions are reached.

The DTI has established its investigation into the floatation of Mirror Group Newspapers. Presumably, it expects that investigation to be taken seriously. Everyone believes that if a DTI inspector makes a serious criticism of a company or individual in its report, the matter should be taken seriously. We believe that the miners and the railway workers wish to make sure that DTI inspections are indeed taken seriously, in view of the wisdom and foresight of the DTI inspectors, who in 1971 said of Mr. Maxwell that, in their view, he was not

"a person who could be relied upon to exercise proper stewardship of a publicly quoted company."

How wise they were. We would go beyond that and say that, in order to protect the interests of the miners and the railway workers, and in particular those of pensioners, no company or individual who has been criticised by a formal DTI inspection in its published report should be entitled to advise on the pensions of either the miners or the railway workers.

Unfortunately, that leads us to what can only be described as the sad and lengthy roll call of the Government's advisers. Coopers and Lybrand, which incidentally was the auditor of Mirror Group Newspapers and its pension fund, and which, during the process of electricity privatisation, had no fewer than 19 advisory contracts, was criticised in a DTI report on the Milford Docks Company.

Ernst and Young, and its predecessor, were involved in advising the Government and the electricity supply industry—it got four advisory contracts out of electricity privatisation—and has been criticised in no fewer than six published DTI reports. It is also the auditor to British Coal and the British Coal pension scheme, which is in direct contravention of the recommendation of the Select Committee on Social Security that it is improper for any organisation to be the auditor of both company accounts and pension scheme accounts.

**Mr. Redmond:** So that we are sure on this, will my hon. Friend tell the House which party was in power when those criticisms were made?

**Mr. Dobson:** I must confess to my hon. Friend that I do not have the date of all six of the reports into Ernst and Young.

The distinguished company of James Capel had only one advisory contract during the process of electricity privatisation but was criticised in the case of Consolidated Gold Fields. Kleinwort Benson, which was the Government's principal adviser on electricity privatisation and had four other contracts, was criticised, as everybody who was a Member of Parliament at the time will remember, in the House of Fraser DTI report.

Peat Marwick McLintock, the accountants, had three electricity advisory contracts and was criticised in the Alexander Howden Holdings case and the Orbit Holdings case. Price Waterhouse, another firm of city accountants, had no fewer than 23 advisory contracts on electricity privatisation, and it has been criticised in the public reports of two DTI inspections, into Norwest Holst and Raymor Investments. Spicer and Oppenheim, its predecessor, which had five advisory contracts on electricity privatisation, was criticised over the Aldermanbury Trust. Smith New Court, of which Lord Walker, who has been mentioned already, is a director, had three advisory contracts on electricity privatisation and was criticised, along with James Capel, over the Consolidated Gold Fields case.

Lest any Conservative Members suggest that these might be trivial or glancing criticisms, I will quote one or two examples of the criticisms levelled at companies that have been on the Government's list up to now, because I do not think that they are trivial. In the Consolidated Gold Fields case, the inspectors said:

"We consider that Smith New Court seriously hindered the company's attempt to pursue its right under section 212, with a view to identifying who had been buying a substantial number of its shares."

It went on to say, and this is probably the most damning aspect:

"Moreover, we consider that Smith New Court did not understand their responsibilities under the Act and did not make any serious attempt to take proper legal advice."

No organisation criticised in that way should be supervising any pension scheme or be involved in any way. Similar criticisms were levied at James Capel.

**Mr. Stephen Milligan** (Eastleigh): The hon. Gentleman lists the shortcomings of these advisory companies, but will he add to the list the name of Mr. Arthur Scargill who, during the miners' strike, shifted money from one account to another with great freedom? Perhaps it would not be a good idea if, as suggested in the new clause, the National Union of Mineworkers had a prime role in giving advice in the future.

**Mr. Dobson:** To the best of my knowledge, Mr. Arthur Scargill will not be appearing in court, which is something

*[Mr. Dobson]*

that distinguishes him from a large number of people who were involved in the Maxwell scandal, and who, if there were any justice in the world, would be appearing in court.

The DTI said about Ernst and Young:

"In our view, the auditors failed to carry out their responsibilities as auditors."

The company had been appointed as auditors and was criticised for not carrying out its duties. Such auditors should not be allowed anywhere near the miners and railway workers pension schemes. The report of the investigation into Raymor Investments said:

"Price Waterhouse's conduct as regards the non-executive directors and the incoming auditors is indefensible."

Should any organisation whose conduct described as indefensible be further employed by the Government, by British Coal or by British Rail? We would not want them supervising our pensions and we should not want them involved, in any way, in looking after someone else's.

5 pm

In the case of the House of Fraser and the al-Fayeds, there is probably no more damning statement to be found in any Department of Trade and Industry report than the comment that was made not just about Kleinworts and Herbert Smith, Government advisers, or Lazard's, Government advisers, or Morgan Grenfell, Government advisers, than the words:

"So far as we know, not one of the advisers appears to have inquired at all critically into the Fayeds' background and bona fides."

There could be no worse criticism of people appointed to look into things critically and to advise than that they never did their job.

We believe that none of these organisations should be allowed anywhere near the giving of any advice about the privatisation of either the coal industry or the electricity industry. What is more, we wonder who maintains this list of advisers and what criteria are applied before people's action, or inaction, is so bad that they are removed from the list. What do they have to do? Get involved in shifting money from Hong Kong into Tory party funds and then losing the money, or something like that? That appears to be the only thing that might prompt the Government to think that they were not up to their job.

**Mr. Redmond:** My hon. Friend wonders how advisers come to be removed from the list. If they stop contributing to the Tory party, they are removed.

The president of the National Union of Mineworkers has been mentioned. Perhaps he ought to be one of the advisers. Arthur would want to ensure that miners had adequate pensions. Despite the vilification, the president of the National Union of Mineworkers has been completely exonerated of any dirty tricks. The House ought to be aware that he has been completely exonerated of any fiddling of pension funds or NUM money. The so-called pension advisers in the City ought to have a look at Arthur's track record with a view to achieving the standards that he has set for himself.

**Mr. Dobson:** I can say only that if advisers were to look into a situation, it is unlikely, on the basis of what I have just read out, that they would notice anything.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): I have been listening very carefully to the comments of my hon. Friend. I am not sure that he quite understands the reasons behind the privatisation, and that concerns me slightly. One of his problems, I think, is that he seriously suspects that advice is taken from private firms in order to facilitate the movement of assets from the state system into private pockets. The point is that there should be an ever more rapid movement of money from the state to the friends of the Conservative party. The view that these people are employed to give independent advice does not correspond with the facts.

**Mr. Dobson:** I have to confess that I have always had the old-fashioned view that the public business of the country should be conducted with honesty and in the interests of the people of the country rather than for the benefit exclusively of the Conservative party and its friends. However, I have become more and more disillusioned over the years.

In view of everything that has appeared in print or has been heard on television and radio. it is clear that any sensible miner or any sensible person working for British Rail must be concerned about what has happened to his pension fund. These people have read about Maxwell, about Imperial Tobacco and about Belling. Today I received a letter from someone who works for British Telecom. That person tells me that it looks as though the company is into contribution holidays and changes in schemes, to the advantage of the shareholders and the disadvantage of the pensioners and people paying in. I have not had time to investigate the ins and outs of the matter, but I am quite prepared to believe that these changes have been made.

Our new clauses are intended to secure from the Government agreement that no one will be appointed to advise on the pensions of the miners or the railway workers unless the Governments and the companies get the consent of the representatives of the work force—and I mean the entire work force.

Our amendments would provide that any change in a pension scheme required the consent of Parliament. Conservative Members have been fairly willing to agree to almost anything in recent times. I live in hope that if our proposal is accepted, or if the Government bring forward an amendment of their own, even the present Conservative party will be unwilling, up front, to vote for something that is to the total disadvantage of pensioners.

I hope that the Government will accept either the amendments or the spirit of the amendments. I come back to a point that I made at the beginning: it will be no good if, in three or four years' time, people come here and bleat about pensioners being robbed, as that could be stopped by action taken today. Bleating afterwards is not good enough any more. Any group of pensioners is entitled to the protection of this House, and that is what should be provided tonight.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I regret having to intervene with a point of order at this stage, but I seek your advice. Today an all-party delegation from the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority met the Minister for Public Transport, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), to discuss the West Yorkshire electrification scheme. The main problen associated with the scheme arises from the anxiety of financial institutions about the effect of privatisation on the transport authority and about

whether, if they were to underwrite a leasing agreement for new rolling stock, they would be able to secure repayment of any loans.

I should like to know whether it would be in order for hon. Members, in the debate on new clause 5, to make brief comments on this matter, in the hope that the Minister for Public Transport would be able to report to the House on the present situation. That new clause refers to rights and liabilities. Or would it be more suitable for brief interventions to be made during the Third Reading debate, which, I understand is to take place later tonight?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** We have not yet reached new clause 5. I shall consider the points that the hon. Member has made, but there is no need to give an immediate answer.

**Mr. Redmond:** As this is the first opportunity I have had to do so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to the Chair. I am confident that you will do an excellent job. Indeed, it is widely accepted in the House that you are doing an excellent job.

It was said during the Second Reading debate and in Committee, and it must be said again, that there ought to be two Bills—one dealing with British Rail and one with British Coal. But we are quite used to the manipulation of Ministers with a view to shoving business through as quickly as possible. The Minister's approach has been that the Government and the Opposition agree in principle with regard to the proposals in the Bill. For a long time, I have not accepted that, when we agree in principle, we can sort out the details later.

I am confident that the Minister's office thinks that that applies to this privatisation legislation. If that is so, it should have been discussed on Second Reading and in Committee, and certainly it should be discussed this evening. The problem is that the Minister simply sits back. He has an outline structure—possibly even the details—of the proposed privatisation, yet hon. Members on both sides of the House are fishing in the dark trying to understand what is happening.

I oppose the holiday that British Coal is taking from the pension scheme. It was agreed to on the casting vote of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. The National Union of Mineworkers was opposed to it and did not participate. I do not understand why the Minsiter is not using his good offices in this matter. He gives assurances that future pension rights will be protected and that there is no need to worry because everything is wonderful, yet he is taking part in a manipulation by British Coal of the pension fund that will rob many of my constituents, who are ex-members of the coal industry, of many pounds. He should step on the toes of British Coal's chairman and bring their cosy relationship to an end.

I think it appropriate to mention the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. It came about through a venture between the workers and British Coal. Over the years, the workers contributed tuppences and threepences week in, week out to bring facilities to mining villages—not just for the enjoyment of the miners and their family, but for the enjoyment of the whole community. Because of that, many mining villages have excellent facilities.

We are a little concerned about what will happen to CISWO's assets if British Coal is privatised. It must be remembered that those assets belong not to British Coal, but to the community. I hope that today the Minister will give a categoric assurance that CISWO lands and schemes —be they cricket, bowling, football or welfare—will not be sold, but will be transferred free of charge to local authorities. I am sure that the Minister is aware that many local authorities are strapped for cash and are having a heck of a job trying to maintain statutory services. They will not have the money to purchase CISWO's lands and schemes from British Coal.

The point should be made that it is not just British Coal that has contributed to the schemes—over the years, the lads and lasses have brought those facilities to the communities for the enjoyment of the people. From British Coal's actions so far, it seems that it will want to exploit those schemes for the benefit of the new private owners. British Coal has a large amount of land, but when members of the public want to purchase any of it, British Coal charges property development prices—that is, if it is prepared to sell at all.

I am sure that the same thing will happen with coal privatisation as happened when the water industry was privatised. There was a piece of land in Warmsworth village where people had tended allotments for many years. Suddenly, the water board wanted them off that land, because it thought that it could get planning consent for development. The same may happen with British Coal. Instead of benefiting the nation and the lads and lasses who spent many years in the coal industry, the new owners will want to dispose of the land to make fat profits for its board and the shareholders. That has happened in other privatised industries. I hope that the Minister will assure us this afternoon that that will not happen with the coal privatisation.

5.15 pm

Concessionary coal is part of the right of the lads and the lasses in the coal industry. Six pits in Yorkshire have protected rights. They include Rossington, which is my patch, and Caeleby—which is closed—in the Don valley constituency. They have protected rights over and above the usual concessionary coal agreement. Will the Minister give an assurance that irrespective of who owns the industry, those rights will be protected? I hope that no one —for example, Fairclough or Monktonhall—will try to take on the industry as a single venture. Unless there are long-term markets, there is no long-term security.

Those six pits in Yorkshire have a right to the same protection as they had prior to privatisation. I hope that any agreement on privatisation will give the lads and lasses of those pits full protection under the law against exploitation. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind the points that I have made.

**Mr. John Heppell** (Nottingham, East): I declare an interest as, at some stage in the future, I may have the opportunity to benefit from a railway pension. I am therefore pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is looking after my interests so well.

I am disappointed by the Bill. My first reason is on political grounds, as I do not like the idea of privatisation, whatever it might mean for the railways. Nevertheless, I recognise reality. The Tories won the election and they are committed to privatisation. Unfortunately, the Bill is not clear about anything else. What does it tell hon. Members, the management of British Rail, the work force and the passengers? Alas, it is very little.

*[Mr. John Heppell]*

My second reason for disappointment is that, in the absence of a White Paper, the Bill is causing confusion and uncertainty throughout the country and especially among the work force and pensioners of British Rail. The Bill is not a blank sheet, it is a blank cheque—but for the benefit of the Government, not the pensioners. That is shown by the catch-all phrase in clause 1 that British Rail be given

"the power to do anything which in their opinion is appropriate for the purpose of ... facilitating the implementation of"

the Government proposals.

That means that it can do exactly as it likes. The Bill suggests that private locomotives and wagons could run on BR track, but that already happens. I am therefore confused about the Bill's purpose. If it confuses me, it must confuse even more BR's existing work force and pensioners. The work force will have to make the changes work—once it is known what those changes are. At present, they do not know whether those changes will include restructuring, after 10 years of restructuring, or whether they will conflict with the Government's present proposals. Neither do the work force and many pensioners know whether their present travel concessions will be protected. Employees are uncertain whether their promotion prospects will be damaged. If they are, their pensions will also be harmed. There are many previous instances of that happening.

The work force and existing pensioners are worried about what will happen to their existing pensions. I do not rely on my pension, because I realised a long time ago, after I entered local government service, that my BR pension would not be sufficient to live on. However, many rely wholly on their BR pension for their future income.

Experience has shown that privatisation has not helped pensioners. The privatisations of British Rail Engineering Ltd, British Transport Hotels, Sealink and Travellers Fare produced pension schemes that were supposed to offer equal benefits and to mirror BR schemes. In fact, many of the new schemes closed, stagnated or offered only marginal improvements. In any event, they have not kept pace with BR schemes, while offering contribution holidays to employees, who pay nothing, while the pensioners receive less.

There is in people's minds today the spectre of Robert Maxwell. That case has concentrated the thoughts of those working in the railway and mining industries about the future of their pension funds. We have read much in the newspapers about the losses made by names at Lloyd's and suggestions that they ought to be compensated. I do not believe that they should. I have no more sympathy for names than I do for those who lose money on the stock exchange or by gambling on horses. Damon Runyon said that all those who play the horses die broke. One takes a risk, and enjoys the profits when one wins—so one must accept the losses when one loses. However, pensioners are not like that. They pay money to provide for their future security.

In the light of the Maxwell fiasco, the Government have an opportunity—which they should not miss—to send out a clear message to those who would con, cheat, rob, and steal from pensioners that such behaviour will not be tolerated. They can also send out to pensioners the message that their pension funds will be protected. The Government can do that today by ensuring that special protection is built into the process of privatisation. If they agree to new clause 1, they can make the minium concession that they should to pensioners.

**Mr. McCartney:** As a member of the Select Committee on Social Security in the previous Parliament, I spent a great deal of time investigating this issue. As a Member of Parliament, I represent a coal mining community; my grandfather and grandmother both worked in a coal mining community, and my Scottish uncle died of pneumoconiosis at an early age. I therefore have some affinity with the new clause. It is necessary, historically and legally, to protect pensioners in coalfield and railway communities. It will also ensure a Government commitment to achieving equity.

In 1984, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) challenged the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Mr. Cecil Parkinson, over the Government's commitment to British Telecom's pensioners on the privatisation of that public service. Mr. Parkinson replied that BT employees would have constitutional rights in respect of their pension scheme—yet two years after BT's privatisation, *The Times* reported on 22 August 1984 that the Opposition's fears about future employees might have been justified.

The article reported that British Telecom intended to introduce a new pension scheme in 1986 that would deny future employees the right to automatic index-linking of pensions—but that it would apply only to people joining British Telecom after 1 April 1986. In other words, British Telecom changed the rules after privatisation, and tens of thousands of pensioners lost the rights that were promised to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, other hon. Members, and the Union of Communication Workers.

In the latter part of last year, the Social Security Select Committee took evidence in respect of the Government's intentions in regard to the pension schemes of nationalised and privatised industries. I quote from the Committee's second report, published on 4 March 1992. We took evidence from a former employee of the National Bus Company who had written to the Committee expressing concern about the effect of privatisation on the fund from which his pension was paid. The report states, in paragraphs 268 to 269:

"The National Audit Office investigated the sale of the National Bus Company, a company which by 1985 accounted for almost half the national bus mileage in England and Wales. The Government in 1984 had proposed the deregulation of the bus industry, and as part of this programme the NBC was to be returned to the private sector in smaller free standing parts. The 1985 Transport Act set the framework for the sale, and required disposal of the company by January 1989.

The proceeds of the sale amounted to £324·2 million. Net receipts to the Exchequer amounted to £165·4 million, of which £120 million was an estimated net surplus on pension funds. Before tax the surplus was £200 million."

The National Audit Office found that the Government had on privatisation asset-stripped the National Bus Company's pension fund, and in doing so were able to present a far rosier picture of the company's resources at the time of its sale. Paragraph 270 adds:

"The Public Accounts Committee in its investigation asked the Department why the pension fund surplus had been claimed as a net receipt from the sale. The Department responded that the figure of £120 million was part of the estimated net receipts following the sale."

The Department offered no satisfactory explanation as to why the assets were used in that way. Current and future

pensioners of British Coal and British Rail schemes are well warned about the Government's promises, attitudes and actions.

I ask the House to consider other cases involving pensioners who lost out through privatisation. BREL pensioners in my constituency were formerly employed by Parkfield Castings and their pensions were lost when that company went bust. They also lost their travel allowances, and were not entitled in law to any recompense.

A more recent case, again notified to the Select Committee late last year, is that of the British Airways helicopter pilots. During negotiations with British Airways at the time of its privatisation, Robert Maxwell and his companies bought British Airways companies and responsibility for helicopter operations in the North sea and the highlands and islands of the United Kingdom. Shortly after the sale, an agreement was reached between Maxwell's companies and British Airways. Employees were told that, as part of their contract of employment, they had agreed to move out of the British Airways pension scheme and into the new British International Helicopters scheme.

5.30 pm

From then on, neither the Occupational Pensions Board nor the City regulators made any effort to take account of what was happening to the pension fund. Now, their pension fund having been looted, the pensioners are bereft of resources, and the Government have only belatedly produced a rescue package that may assist them in the short term. The House did nothing to protect pensioners at the time of the British Airways privatisation.

At the time of the privatisation of the National Freight Corporation, agreements were reached as a result of which the Government still make a small contribution to the pension fund. In every other case of privatisation, however, the Government have failed lamentably to take account of the consequences. That can be seen clearly when we examine the history of corporate takeovers in the 1980s. Most of the companies targeted by Hanson and others were targeted not because of their performances in regard to exports or investment, but purely because of the tangible assets held by their pension funds and the ease with which corporate raiders could get their hands on those assets. In the 1980s, the self-regulatory system in the City failed again and again to accommodate the rights of pensioners.

In legal terms, the most important case so far has been that involving Hanson and the tobacco industry. The Select Committee took a good deal of evidence about the consequence of Hanson's attempt to raid the pension funds. I have not raised the subject of Hanson because I see him as a bogeyman in relation to the new clause. It is likely that Hanson and his companies—such as Peabody's Coal Company—will try to purchase parts of the British coal industry, and that they will have a direct influence on, and interest in, the consequences of the break-up of British Coal and the future of the assets of its two major pension funds. Those assets amount to more than £12 billion. Hanson's history is vital in this connection, and the Government should be required to include in the Bill clauses to take account of the court ruling on the subject.

In both his summing up and his written judgment, the judge in the Hanson case said that he could not understand why the trustees representing the employees had immediately been made redundant when they raised objections to the attempt to manipulate pension fund assets. The trustees who replaced them had done the same, and they, too, had been made redundant. The judge suggested that Hanson had used intimidating tactics to ensure that he could place on the board of trustees people who would simply rubber-stamp his intentions. Luckily, the court and, eventually, the House of Lords made arrangements for the funds to be protected, but it took tens of millions of pounds of pension fund assets for that to happen. Moreover, Hanson did not meet the costs of legal advice; the pensioners met the cost from the pension funds. The Government must write into the Bill clear commitments in respect of pensioners' rights.

The Bill has come at an embarrassing time for the Government. They will probably publish tomorrow their response to the report on occupational pension funds, published—as I said earlier—on 4 March 1992. Until 3.30 pm tomorrow, we shall not know what that response will be, but one thing is certain: no one can doubt the inadequacy of trust law in protecting pensioners, whether it applies to takeovers, privatisations or the general run of investment policies.

The most important aspect of the new clause is the need to ensure that professional advisers are independent of both the Government and management. Time and again, evidence to the Select Committee has make it plain that the main problem is the failure of warning systems to operate effectively, or at all. In almost every instance of the plundering or potential plundering of pension funds, professional advisers have been tied hand and foot to the companies employing them.

That does not apply only to Maxwell. Believe it or not, the Select Committee has received abundant evidence of corruption on both a large and small scale, and of unhelpful practices by employers. Some of those practices, although morally indefensible, are entirely legal, such as stock lending—lending to oneself a large proportion of investment funds as though a free banking system were in operation, or taking large pension holidays at the expense of future pensioners, as British Coal is currently doing. I hope that the Government will do something about that.

Apart from the professional advisers, everyone who has given evidence to the Select Committee—solicitors, barristers, private-sector advisers to the pensions industry, trade unions, pensioners' organisations and deferred pensioners' organisations—has said, "For God's sake, bring in legislation to protect us from advisers who are representing the company on one hand and, on the other hand, are responsible for advising trustees about the investment and the movement in and out of the portfolio of hard cash or assets belonging to pensioners." The Maxwell case is a fine example. A total of £1·8 million was taken out of the Maxwell pension funds in the space of a few months at the end of last year to pay the professional advisers. Maxwell did not pay them; the pensioners had to. That was rubbing salt in the wound—making the pensioners pay advisers who had never advised them.

An adviser in one firm of solicitors was paid more than £40,000 from the pension fund for writing a single letter on behalf of Maxwell and his fellow directors. The letter was a carefully constructed lie in response to complaints that had been received about the manipulation of funds. That solicitor still practises in the City. He admitted to the Select Committee that for writing a letter he had received more than £40,000—it had taken him more than six weeks

to construct the letter—from the very pensioners who had asked him to investigate corrupt practices. That is entirely unacceptable.

During that critical 12-month period when the auditors were licensed by the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation to regulate their own investments, they literally closed their eyes and their books and walked away. As they did so, hundreds of millions of pounds were taken out of the fund and are now to be found in various parts of the world. That is what might happen to British Rail's pension fund and to the mineworkers pension funds. These pension funds will be at greatest risk after privatisation. The City cannot wait to get its hands on them.

It is essential, therefore, that the Government should put on to the face of the Bill clear and precise arrangements that take account of the Select Committee's inquiry into pension fraud. The Government must also take into account what the industry, the managers' associations, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the National Union of Mineworkers have said to them. If the Government are not prepared to do so, history will be repeated. The asset-rich pension funds of British Coal and British Rail will be part and parcel of the sell-off. They will be the only reason for the sell-off. One only has to consider what happened after electricity privatisation. Under the contract arrangements, British Coal has been run into the ground. British Coal's only tangible asset is coal in the ground and its pension fund.

The Government must give commitments if they are to end the sincere worry of those employed in the industry and of the hundreds of thousands of pensioners and future pensioners. Unless the Government give those commitments, we shall have to divide the House and, by campaigning, make people aware of the fact that, despite Maxwell and the Select Committee's report, the Government are still prepared to gamble with the assets of public-sector pensioners.

**Mr. Eric Clarke** (Midlothian): I echo what has already been said by my hon. Friends, in particular by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I worked in the coal mining industry and was the mineworkers' trade union representative until I was made redundant. Active and retired mine workers, and also their wives and widows, are extremely worried. I make no apologies for repeating that fact. We are talking about ordinary people and many honest individuals who have given their lives and their health to the industry. Some of them lie awake at night wondering what is going to happen. I appeal again to the Government, as I appealed to them in Committee, to look at what is going to happen to the fund.

It is difficult not to repeat what others have said, but I shall try my best to consider this matter from another angle. CIN, a highly respected organisation, runs the pension fund. It is even respected in the City. Its investments on behalf of miners, their widows and others, are second to none. It makes investments throughout the world. I represented the trade union side on the fund for four years. The people who administer the pension fund are tough. I want to know what the Government intend to do about the fund.

If the industry is privatised, miners will not necessarily find that their pension fund investments are made by that organisation. I am asking for continuity. If doubt is cast on its future, the headhunters in the City of London and elsewhere will take away its top people. In addition, between 290 and 300 people administer the fund in Sheffield and elsewhere. They earn their livelihood by looking after the pensioners' interests. I want to know what is going to happen to these people. They have done a good job. This is a good organisation. It would be a crime if it were to be split up after privatisation.

5.45 pm

Some pension fund money has been put into works of art. That may be a great way of increasing the amount of cash, but it is not working for anyone. The works of art are either in museums or vaults. The money that is in this fund is working for people and has been invested in this country. I took a great deal of pleasure from the fact that money was lent to people who were starting up on green field sites or were pursuing other activities.

It is internationally accepted that this country is at the top of the league when it comes to new ideas. The silicon chip and many other inventions were the result of work done in learned institutions and technical colleges in this country, but they were developed and manufactured by other countries. The conservative attitude in the City of London and in our finance houses leads them to look for a return on their money yesterday. Six months is too long; a year is impossible. However, our Japanese competitors talk about getting a return in 10 or 12 years and of having a monopoly over any invention.

This organisation, however, waits for a return for anything up to six years. It does not have rose-tinted glasses; it does not give money to non-starters. It has been so successful that British Rail has asked it to take on its investments. That encourages intitiative and provides jobs for people in mining areas and elsewhere. It leads to investment in the know-how and initiative of the British people, which is second to none. That fact alone should lead to the Government allowing this fund to stay alive and the investment experts together. Risk capital is one of the particular strengths of this organisation.

We cannot, however, just sit back and say that everything is all right with this fund. One has to bear in mind the Maxwell nightmare. The fund must be well organised. Its assets must not be handed over to anybody else.

I ask the Minister to take on board my arguments on behalf of the mining communities who have invested their wealth and health in this country. The miners were never seen to be wanting when it came to campaigning against fascism. They fought for this country in two world wars. I do not want a Maxwell scandal to come out of this. There should not even be the hint of a Maxwell scandal here. I want a guarantee from the Minister that the cash that has been built up for their pensions by people who have created wealth for this country will be preserved.

I am not talking about City or stock exchange manipulations, or about somebody walking away with millions of pounds. I am talking about hard work to create wealth, generating power and energy for industry, commerce and domestic use. Without the coal industry, we would be in a poor position. Many countries envy our energy assets, but I am worried that they will be stripped before privatisation.

I want a moratorium on some of British Coal's activities. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) mentioned land being sold off. Two

anthracite mines are being sold in south Wales. I want to know about the other deals that are going on. We cannot stop them dead in their tracks, but I want the Minister to ensure that, before the Bill takes effect, he analyses any asset pertaining to the sale. Asset stripping may occur before privatisation. I do not trust some of the people who are running British Coal—and one person in particular, who hon. Members know all about.

The Government might get up to some of their old tricks by selling off assets to their friends or someone else before privatisation. Those assets belong to the industry and to the people of this country. I do not want any funny deals to be done before privatisation. That goes for pit closures as well. Premature pit closure can be detrimental asset stripping. I hope that the Minister will consider that.

I shall close there—I know that we shall debate other amendments later—but that does not mean that I am not interested in safety, concessionary coal or the other organisations that have been mentioned. However, it is important that we concentrate on pension funds.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): I want briefly to support the new clause and to ask the Minister to take on board the fact that this is not just a ritual debate on privatisation. I have served on several privatisation and enabling Bills, in which, properly, there have always been debates on pensions.

The Minister must accept that what has happened in the past year has brought into sharp focus the concerns of thousands of people who are affected by the proposed privatisations. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to British International Helicopters, whose operational headquarters are in my constituency. At the time of the proposed privatisation of British Airways, the work force of British Airways Helicopters, as it then was, were assured that their pension funds would be safe and that they would continue to be full members of the British Airways pension fund. Even when it became apparent that British Airways' management, having said that it had no intention of selling the company, was in negotiations to do so, the work force were told that they would be safeguarded as continuing members of the pension fund.

The Minister will understand, therefore, how sick and cynical those people now feel. They are victims of the Maxwell fraud and, as I understand it, they do not know whether they will benefit from the Secretary of State's rescue fund. As of a few days ago, two employees who had reached pensionable age since the winding-up of the Maxwell pension fund had not received any payment from the Mirror Group, which does not accept responsibility, or from the Secretary of State's rescue fund.

That sad example shows the dangers of fragmenting pension funds at the point of privatisation. In his detailed proposals to privatise rail and coal, will the Minister consider whether pension funds continue to exist as single entities rather than their being frozen and new pension funds being set up for each new company that is privatised? For example, if British Rail's employees were to transfer to one of the franchised companies, or if the coal industry were sold on a regional group basis or pit by pit, whereby employees were transferred to, for example, Yorkshire Collieries Ltd., would the Minister ensure that they did not cease to be members of their previous pension funds and were not moved into a smaller and, by definition, more vulnerable pension fund that did not have the benefit of accumulated assets?

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made a powerful point about contribution holidays. It would be ironic if such employees found that their new employer did not offer the benefit of the accumulated successfully managed fund and had to start from scratch without receiving a contribution that would bring the fund up to the same competitive level from which they had benefited up to that point and which they might have hoped to continue until full retirement age.

The anxieties of pension fund contributors are bound to have been sharpened by what has happened in the past year. The lack of clarity in the Government's plans on how British Rail and the railways will be operated under their new proposals and how the coal industry will be privatised add to that uncertainty. It would be helpful if the Minister said that existing pension funds will not be frozen or broken up and that some mechanism will be found to ensure that payments continue.

The Secretary of State for Social Security is reviewing pension law. If the law has not been amended to take on board the concerns that have been expressed in the debate, will the Minister undertake to ensure that the legislation for the privatisation of the coal and rail industries will enhance the guarantees and protections that are being sought for those pension fund holders and to give serious consideration to ensuring that pension funds are not broken up?

**Mr. McCartney:** It might be helpful if the Minister were prepared to introduce an arrangement similar to that for electricity privatisation. The Department of Social Security proposed regulations to ensure that when the regional companies took over on vesting day the pension funds were protected. The machinery was complicated, but the Government introduced it because of the pressure that was put on them.

**Mr. Bruce:** The Minister will have heard that pertinent observation. To some extent, we do not seem to have learnt fully; we continue to reinvent the wheel and each new privatisation creates its own problems.

The Minister will have heard many powerful and specific speeches, articulating concerns and asking him particular questions. I hope that he will recognise that this is not just a token gesture for which a token assurance will be acceptable and that he must show that the Government take on board the seriousness of people's concerns. He must assure hon. Members that the Government will address those concerns under general pension legislation —and, I suggest, under the privatisation Bills that will be introduced—and that existing funds will continue and will be safeguarded.

**Mr. Michael Clapham** (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I support what my hon. Friend for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said in moving the new clause. A number of important issues have been raised in the debate. I want to concentrate my comments on the mining industry and its pension schemes. At present, four pension schemes operate. The first is the mineworkers contractors pension scheme, which provides the same benefits to sub-contract workers as is provided under the mineworkers pension scheme for industrial workers. The second

*[Mr. Michael Clapham]*

pension scheme is that of the British Association of Colliery Management; the third is for supervisory workers and the fourth is the mineworkers' pension scheme.

The accumulated funds of the four schemes are well in excess of £12 billion, which is a great attraction to an asset stripper. Therefore, it is essential that we are able to ring-fence the schemes. The Minister has already made promises about what he is prepared to do, but we must go beyond promises. We need copper-bottomed guarantees in the form of legislation, perhaps part of the Bill, to ensure that the mining communities have the necessary protection.

Miners are already beginning to suffer anguish. For example, on Saturday two constituents came to my surgery to ask whether their pensions would be guaranteed, and I am sure that the same has happened to many of my hon. Friends.

6 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred to the pensions holiday which has been in existence since 1987. The Minister will be aware that British Coal took £300 million out of the first surplus. The second sum taken from the surplus was £435 million, making a total of £735 million taken from the mineworkers' pension scheme to provide a contributions holiday. That has been an enormous help for British Coal, but it has been detrimental to the pensioners.

British Coal will not now make a contribution to the scheme until the year 2001. That is ironic at a time when we are talking about selling the industry. Companies that we could call sharks are circling the industry, ready to move in, and will be able to take advantage of the contributions holiday which, as I said, will last to the year 2001.

In giving copper-bottomed guarantees, I hope that the Minister will be able to examine how the pension scheme will operate in the future. Perhaps he will be prepared to consider a national pension scheme for all the industry's workers, irrespective of the shape that the future privatised industry may take, so that a man working for subcontractors who are further subcontracted will not have a worse pension than any other payroll worker. We need a uniformity of pension provision throughout the industry, and I sincerely hope that the Minister will take that suggestion on board.

At the same time, we must consider how employees can be guaranteed rights when they transfer from one employer to another within a national pension scheme. If they are part of national pension scheme, it must be guaranteed that their pension will remain in that scheme without the same transferred values as there would otherwise be, especially if the industry has perhaps seven or eight different employers.

New clause 3 is essential because it will provide the protection which the mining communities require. New clause 7 requires consultation with those representing mineworkers, such as those on management committees of pension funds. I hope that the Minister will guarantee open consultation and that new clause 7 will be accepted.

I was interested in what my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) said about new clause 9 and land. New clause 9 also refers to colliery welfare organisations. The Minister will be aware that the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation, which has been in existence since 1947, has done a great deal of cultural work in mining communities but has also assisted mineworkers' families whose breadwinner has been injured.

For example, in my area of South Yorkshire, we have a paraplegic centre run by the social welfare organisation, which miners who have been crippled in the collieries can attend. At the same time, social workers do an enormous amount to support families who have reduced incomes since their breadwinners suffered an injury in the industry. Will the Minister consider a formula whereby the coal industry social welfare organisation may continue?

British Rail has vast amounts of land, much of which is farmed by tenant farmers, as is the case in my constituency. I hope that the Minister will be cautious and will ensure that land sales do not take place over the heads of the farmers or without any consultation. It is essential that such farmers are consulted and, if possible, given the opportunity to buy the land. Some of them—or their families—have farmed the land since 1947, and they should be given the opportunity to buy it rather than becoming tenant farmers of a landowner about whom they know little. I hope that the Minister will take that point on board.

The new clauses covering pensions are essential. I hope that the Minister will say that he is prepared to accept them to give pensioners in the mining communities the protection that they require.

**Mr. Skinner:** Last week the parliamentary miners' group went to visit the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I think that he is called "President", but one of our group decided to ask him how he wanted to be addressed. To be honest, he seemed a bit embarrassed, but they settled for "Hezza". I am not sure that he liked it, but he had to lump it. Ten of us met him in the new Department of Trade and Industry building, which is called Ashdown house. I do not know whether there is any political significance in that, but I should not want to be stuck in a building named after Paddy Backdown.

It was interesting that we were only a few hundred yards from another building, 25 Victoria street, which the President of the Board of Trade used in the back end of 1990 to campaign to get rid of Thatcher. There were television cameras outside when the campaign was launched. I took a special interest in it and wondered what had happened to the building. It is blighted. Grilles have been put up, as happens when a property has gone down and been left empty for a long time.

I seriously believe that there is a big property scam. The DTI building at the bottom of Victoria street is being closed and is now part of the blight. I reckon that a property company will buy the lot and make a big fat killing. Where will the money come from? It will probably come from the miners' or the railway workers' pension funds. That is how such companies get the finance. They get it out of pension fund money; it is not their own money.

The Minister should come clean and give us a guarantee that nothing connected with the Department of Trade and Industry or with No. 25 Victoria street will go to line the pockets of any Tory Member who votes on the Bill. That could happen. Hon. Members are meant to declare a conflict of interest. As sure as night follows day, some Tory Members will go into the Lobby in the knowledge that the

pension fund money belonging to men and women who have slogged their guts out all their lives will be used to fill their pockets and to help them to make a killing.

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham) *rose*——

**Mr. Skinner:** I have caught one.

**Mr. Arnold:** I am somewhat confused by the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument. Was not Robert Maxwell a Labour Member?

**Mr. Skinner:** As the hon. Gentleman has introduced the subject, I will tell him what Robert Maxwell was. Mr. Deputy Speaker has heard the question, so I must answer it. Robert Maxwell was a mate of Peter Walker's. Peter Walker was a Minister in the Tory Government from beginning to end. He served Thatcher loyally for 13 years. When he packed up, just before he finished as a Member of Parliament, he was one of the 19 ex-Cabinet Ministers who had 59 moonlighting jobs between them. His last moonlighting job before he finished as a Member of Parliament was to join Robert Maxwell and to launder money. He got £450,000 out of Maxwell—I am sorry, out of pensioners.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. I trust that the word "pensioners" came in. The hon. Gentleman knows the rules of the House. May we get back to the new clause, please?

**Mr. Skinner:** I brought in the word "pensioners" because it is relevant to the debate. What happened in the Maxwell pension fiddle in relation to Peter Walker, who took £450,000 out of the pockets of Mirror Group Newspapers pensioners and got a Mercedes car worth £50,000, is relevant to the debate. Peter Walker should pay back the money. Every Tory Member should demand that the ex-Tory Cabinet Minister pays the money back into the pensioners' pockets.

I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have constituents who were part of the mighty lobby a few weeks ago when the Maxwell pensioners pleaded for justice. I am sure that you agree that Peter Walker should put his hand in his back pocket and send the money back —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] That is unanimous.

This debate is about considering whether such a pension fiddle could happen again. Many of my hon. Friends have mentioned that it is quite possible. The debate is about ensuring, if we can—we cannot be sure about Tories—that all Labour Members are fully aware of what can happen with pension money.

It is not long since the miners had a meeting with British Coal about their pensions. British Coal said, "If we have a pensions holiday, we can get £435 million and British Coal will not have to pay any money until 2001." Our people in the National Union of Mineworkers said, "You are not going to do that. If you have any spare money, it should go to pay miners who have retired, and those who have been made redundant and thrown on the scrap heap. It should go to the widows of those miners who died choking with pneumoconiosis. Give it to them." That would have meant an extra 16 per cent., which would not have broken the bank. Some pensioners get only £10 a week. My mother, before she went, used to get £10 a week after my dad died.

What has British Coal done? It has pocketed £435 million. How did it achieve that? It achieved it by its people voting for it, together with Prendergast, the representative of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers —the scab union. I use that phrase especially for those who might have doubts about the UDM.

The other Sunday, I read in the business section of *The Sunday Times*—before it ran the Di story, because there is nothing in the second section other than that now—that Mr. Hanson, a well-known fan of Mrs. Thatcher and the Tory party who has now changed his allegiance to the present Prime Minister because it suits his pocket, has said that he will take Canary Wharf off the Government's hands and that he will take over the mining industry if he can use the £435 million from the pension fund. He could then buy the industry with the miners' own money—their deferred wages. That is clever. I want the Minister to tell us that that will not happen and that neither Hanson nor anybody else will use pension fund money to buy the remains of the coal mining industry.

6.15 pm

Let us imagine what would happen if the UDM decided to cash in. The UDM does not have enough money to buy the coal industry. Let us suppose that having voted to have the pension holiday, it is then able to use some of the money to get a stake in the privatised coal industry. That is a conflict of interests. The Minister has a duty to tell us that that will not happen in the industry. If it does, all the talk about Maxwell and the rest is meaningless.

We met the President of the Board of Trade. Like Cecil Parkinson, whom we met once, he was badly briefed. Two or three years ago, we asked Cecil Parkinson how he would privatise British Coal; he did not know. He told the Tory party conference that the Government would privatise British Coal. What did that mean?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. This is out of order in relation to the new clauses. Will the hon. Gentleman please get back to the pensioners?

**Mr. Skinner:** I do not want to teach grandmothers how to suck eggs, but I will tell you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Privatisation of the coal mining industry is wrapped up in all the amendments and new clauses. If you want me to find some labyrinthine way to get back to the new clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will take the time necessary to do so, but I do not think that you want me to waste time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I do not mind how the hon. Gentleman gets back to the new clause; I would like him to get back to it.

**Mr. Skinner:** The new clauses and the pension scheme are closely connected with the privatisation of the coal mining industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is what the paving Bill is about. There are some clever people in the City, who are close to the Tory party and who are financing the Tory campaign, who have said, "We will help you to privatise the coal mining industry and we will use the pensioners' money to do it—we will pinch it out of the pockets of the widows and retired miners." Have you got it, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Are we on the ball? I think that we are. I ask the Minister for some clear answers to the questions put by me and by my hon. Friends.

The sell-off will be a sleazy affair because it is possible for the Minister to make statements here today, but then if the Bill becomes law to say, "The industry is privatised —it is none of my business." A private entrepreneur may get hold of the pension funds. The Minister can then say,

*[Mr. Skinner]*

"We were clean and pure until the industry was privatised; now we have no contact with it—it is the owners' business."

I want an assurance from the Minister that even after privatisation the Government will ensure that coal, pensions and all other entitlements are kept secure, as they were after nationalisation in 1947. It is no good saying that we are going to change things now. Let us suppose that the industry is sold off twice, first to one body and then to another. That is quite conceivable. The Minister might say that the Government managed to safeguard the pension entitlements when they passed the industry over to the first purchaser, but if it is passed on again, those entitlements may be lost.

**Mr. Redmond** *rose*——

**Mr. Skinner:** I can see my hon. Friend straining at the leash, so I will give way to him.

**Mr. Redmond:** The House should be aware of the problems that have occurred following privatisation of other nationalised industries. Far from the El Dorado that we were promised after privatisation, there have been enormous problems and the public have had to pick up the bill. They are paying a terrible price for mistakes which have occurred in legislation. The privatisation of British Coal is a complicated business. Unless we get it spot on, people will make a killing from it and some people will die as a result of being ripped off by the City and as a result of mistakes made in this House.

**Mr. Skinner:** I was trying to point that out, but you were not too keen on me travelling down that road, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Suffice it to say that my hon. Friend is correct. The privatisation of British Coal is unlike any other privatisation. It is impossible to secure markets in an industry where one is battling against mother nature. That is why we subsidise farmers in Britain. They cannot produce food as cheaply as it can be produced in Mediterranean areas, in parts of the Common Market or elsewhere in countries with better climates.

There must be a change of philosophy to secure the mining industry. Privatisation could mean the death knell of the British coal industry. Some Tory Members do not care about that, but many Opposition Members do.

Reference was made to finding the Maxwell money. En passant, I believe that if the Government want to find that money, they should do what they did in respect of the miners' money in 1984. They followed the miners' money to Luxembourg, Ireland and everywhere else. The Government found it in a few months. If they want to get the Maxwell pensioners' money back, they should act in that way. They should deal with the banks so that the Maxwell pensioners who do not have two halfpennies to rub together can get their money back.

The Minister's job today is to give us a guarantee that if the industry is handed over, all the pension entitlements will be secure—not for 12 months, or two years, but way beyond the year 2000 so that everyone who receives a pension will continue to receive it.

**The Minister for Energy** (Mr. Tim Eggar): Whatever hon. Members thought about what the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had to say, they must agree that it was good entertainment.

**Mr Peter Snape** (West Bromwich, East): Your speech will not be.

**Mr. Eggar:** My speech will certainly not be as riveting as that of the hon. Member for Bolsover.

No matter what differences there may be between the Government and the Opposition in the House or the differences between us in Standing Committee, there was total agreement about the importance of the pension fund. It is critical to those who receive pensions. As the hon. Member for Bolsover said, many of those pensioners receive very small amounts. The pension fund is also important for the hundreds of thousands of people who will receive a pension in the future. It is also important for those who are still employed in the industry.

The Government and the trustees of the present pension fund must decide how, given that the Government have decided to privatise the industry, those pension funds are to be allocated and how the Government's determination to safeguard the pensions and the pension funds can be implemented.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) raised an interesting point. He wanted to know whether it is appropriate, given that privatisation is going to happen, to section off parts of the pension fund relating to those people with entitlements who are still in the industry. I assume that he believes that, if that was the route to be followed, any sectioned-off amount would automatically reflect the proportion of any surplus or overall assets in the main fund. The hon. Member for Gordon wanted to know how those assets would be protected. The hon. Member for Bolsover made the same point in more colourful language. He wanted to know how those vital assets could be protected for the rights of the individuals who had paid at least a proportion of the total assets in the fund if the industry was sold on in future.

Those are very complex issues. The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) recognised that the factors involve the ratio between the number of present contributors and apparent and future beneficiaries. Those factors are unique to the British Coal pension fund. Indeed, the fund is not simply unique in terms of the size of its assets. Those complex questions must be addressed very carefully.

In response to the hon. Members for Midlothian, for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney)—who made a particularly interesting speech with his expertise from the Select Committee on Social Services—I must state that we are determined to achieve a solution that is just and fair for all the different participants in the pension fund. We have said that we are going to safeguard pensioners' rights under the pension scheme, and will certainly stick by that undertaking.

I state quite specifically that there has never been and there will never be, so long as I stand at the Dispatch Box and am responsible for policy in the area, any rip-off by any potential purchaser of the coal industry of the accumulated assets under the pension funds. That would be totally inexcusable, and no member of the Government would put up with it.

**Mr. Jimmy Hood** (Clydesdale): The Minister seemed to say that he was relying on the trustees of the miners' pension scheme to safeguard the interests of miners' pensions. Is the Minister aware that 50 per cent. of the trustees represent British Coal management, who are

scheming at present for a management buy-out? There is evidence from the holiday that is costing £435 million of pensioners' money that the management are intent on using the money. I hope that the Minister will not tell us that he is relying on the good will of the trustees of the miners' pension scheme. I hope that the Government will provide the safeguards in black and white in legislation to safeguard miners' pensions.

**Mr. Eggar:** I have given an assurance to the House on behalf of the Government. Clearly, the trustees of the pension fund at the moment have a duty to the pensioners and to act in an appropriate way. The hon. Member for Midlothian is well aware of how that operates. I agree with the hon. Member for Midlothian that the pension fund has been well managed. It consistently performs at the top end of pension fund performance, and I have every hope that that will continue to be the case. However, it is unfair to the trustees of the pension fund to imply that any of them in any way at any time believes that giving the holiday to British Coal was a way of assisting them in a management or employee buy-out of the industry. That kind of rumour and slur simply do not help a very important and serious debate.

We have heard much about the holiday for British Coal. No Opposition Member has mentioned that, on the previous valuation, there was a surplus of more than £1,400 million in the mineworkers' pension scheme, and £1,000 million of that went back to the beneficiaries in one form or another. It was not distributed solely for the purpose of giving a holiday to British Coal, and the House of Commons should recognise that.

6.30 pm

**Mr. Dobson:** How can the Minister expect miners to accept his assurances about the future of the pension scheme when they know of the assurances that Mr. Peter Walker gave when he was the Secretary of State for Energy before he went off to the other place? He assured the miners that there would be no change in the law governing the number of hours that may be worked underground, and no repeal of the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 without their agreement. However, the Government repealed that law without the miners' agreement. How can the Minister expect miners to accept an assurance on pensions when the Government have gone back on their previous assurances on safety?

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman's speeches in the House and at Barnsley were an absolute disgrace. He was deliberately and consciously, I suspect for reasons more to do with the shadow Cabinet elections than anything else, seeking to stir up concern and worry about pensions in the coalfield communities. We can do many things in the House and we can have many debates about the right way to privatise the industry and about the right way to protect pensioners, but the depths to which the hon. Gentleman is prepared to sink really disturb me.

We are talking about individuals—people who go to hon. Members' surgeries because they are worried about their pensions. The least we should offer them—we should be able to reassure them—is a sensible analysis of the options. The scaremongering and low-level tactics pursued by the hon. Gentleman are most disturbing and surprising from a member of the Opposition Front Bench, in particular.

**Mr. Dobson:** The House of Commons is a place where laws are made. The least we can do to assure miners, railway workers and pensioners is to pass some laws to protect them, and not rely on feeble ministerial assurances from a Government who have already gone back on previous assurances affecting the self-same industry.

**Mr. Eggar:** I differ from the hon. Gentleman in that I am simply not prepared to play political football with people's pensions for political gain. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that this is a paving Bill. He knows perfectly well that it is structured to enable British Coal and British Rail to get the necessary advice to enable them to prepare themselves for privatisation. He knows as well as other hon. Members that the time for detailed and legal consideration of matters relating to pensions and other matters relating to privatisation is when the House considers the main Bill, yet he goes around the country and repeats again today, and he will do it again—*[Interruption.]* He is deliberately worrying individuals out there in the country. He is not even prepared to do so in anything resembling a balanced way. He knows perfectly well that he will have a chance to debate those matters when the Bill comes before the House. I simply do not understand how he can act so irresponsibly.

**Mr. Madden:** Opposition Members are concerned about the pension funds of two great industries and the people who serve those industries. Will the Minister answer a very simple question? When privatisation is proposed, will the pension funds be protected and safeguarded by legislation, bearing in mind that Ministers come and go, that their assurances are not worth the paper they are written on, and that one Government cannot commit another Government? Will the Minister give a clear and simple answer to the question put a few minutes ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)? Will the pension funds be safeguarded by legislation?

**Mr. Eggar:** I have said categorically, and I say again, that individuals' pension rights will be safeguarded. The mechanism that is used to achieve that end has not yet been decided upon. The hon. Member for Makerfield drew attention to the method that had been used for the electricity industry privatisation. That is one option; there are a number of others. I say quite categorically that we are committed to safeguarding pensions, we will safeguard pensions, and we will use the most appropriate method to do just that.

**Mr. Redmond:** Obviously, the protection of pensions is a crucial point. When people such as Lord Hanson are whipping around the country ripping off, selling or disposing of assets, we can understand people's fear. British Coal and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers combined to vote for the free holiday period. If the Minister is suggesting—I hope he is not—that the present structure is to be maintained, I urge him to rethink. It would make pensioners extremely happy if there were a regulatory body purely and simply to look after pensioners' rights which could not utilise their funds in any way, shape or form. It is very important that the present structure—the UDM and the National Union of Mineworkers—will not be satisfactory if privatisation

*[Mr. Redmond]*

takes place. There has to be something else that takes the control of pensions from the industry but gives the lads and lasses protection.

**Mr. Eggar:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's points. It is just those factors that we need to consider and decide, taking into account the points that have been made by other hon. Gentlemen, so that we provide essential safeguarding in the most appropriate way. There are many factors that we have to take into account. Of course, whatever structure is finally decided, the pension funds will be covered by the normal legislation with regard to the safeguarding on monetary amounts, and that has always been the case.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Eggar:** I shall give way one last time.

**Mr. Clarke:** When we privatise the industry, we may nationalise the funds. It worries me that the Treasury might have its eye on the assets of the funds. The Minister will guarantee to the people, "Yes, we will look after you; yes, you will get your pension at this rate." The Minister said that there are other methods. Other methods can be other methods. I am very suspicious of that. I want an assurance that the benefits of the funds, investment and know-how go into the Treasury and not into people's pockets. They will be frozen and the benefits of the know-how and future surpluses created by that fund will go to the Treasury. That is not the road down which I want to go. I want a guarantee from the Government but I do not want people to pay a high price for it. One of the problems is that the Minister can give a guarantee from the Despatch Box but people will pay for it.

**Mr. Eggar:** I see the hon. Gentleman's point but, clearly, the method used must be considered. We must ensure that pensioners' rights are safeguarded in the most appropriate way.

**Mr. Snape:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Eggar:** No.

**Mr. Snape** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman can see that the Minister is not giving way.

**Mr. McCartney:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. When it is clear that the Minister is not giving way, I should be grateful if hon. Members would take their seats.

**Mr. McCartney:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I persist in this matter because the Minister has mentioned me twice—I accept that he has not attacked me yet—and it would have been common courtesy to give way to me just for a moment.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is abusing the point of order system.

**Mr. Snape:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Eggar:** With due respect to the hon. Gentleman, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Makerfield and promise that, in due course, I shall attack him if that will do any good.

**Mr. McCartney:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Your persistence has paid off.

I suggest that the Minister reads a textbook entitled "Essential Guide to Pensions", page 188 of which says that the Government have a standard policy for pension funds in the event of privatisation. First, they close down the current fund so that new entrants have completely different benefits. They then remove the right to indexation and other benefits. That is not my view but was written by Sue Ward, who has just been appointed by the Secretary of State for Social Security on the committee to review pensions law and whether pensioners need better protection. So the Government's advisers say that the Government have a set pattern, which means that, in the long run, pensioners lose out through privatisation. Is the Minister prepared to read that book and learn from it?

**Mr. Eggar:** I have not read the book to which the hon. Gentleman refers. However, in his speech he elegantly drew attention to the fact that, in practice, the Government had adopted a number of different approaches to the pension funds in various privatisations. So the assertion that there is only one methodology does not stand up, even on the analysis in his speech.

**Mr. Snape:** Does the Minister accept that his allegations about my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) scaremongering and his refusal to answer detailed questions on this complex matter are not helpful to the House? Does he recollect the exchanges in Standing Committee A on 18 June, when my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Mr. Hill) pointed out the case of a British Rail employee who moved from the publicly owned railways to the privately owned British Rail Engineering Ltd., then back to the publicly owned railway and saw his pension years reduced because of that move? The move was perfectly understandable and part of the promotion chain within that industry, but his pension years were reduced from 11 to three and a half purely because he had made that transfer. Given the fact that the Government want a multiplicity of railway operators, what guarantee can the Minister give now, not at some time in the future, that that will not happen after this wretched Bill has been enacted?

6.45 pm

**Mr. Eggar:** I am sure that the hon. Member for Makerfield will bear out the fact that the whole question of transfer rights—concerning a transfer from an existing pension fund to another pension fund and back again—affects the ultimate value of a pension. That effect operates whatever kind of pension fund it is. One of my hon. Friends has been trying to improve that problem in recent legislation. However, we shall consider those factors when we look at the structure relating to pension funds in the future.

**Mr. McCartney:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Eggar:** No, I have been more than generous.

The hon. Members for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) and for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) asked about social welfare arrangements. I shall give that matter

careful consideration. It is a complicated subject and there are many different entitlements with many different historical antecedents. As several hon. Members have said, significant assests are associated with them.

If the hon. Member for Don Valley has particular constituency problems, I should be grateful if he would draw my attention to those. He also asked about concessionary fuel entitlements and the position of individuals in his constituency with pre-1947 rights. We are aware of that problem and will try to take account of it in ensuring that our pledge that concessionary fuel will be safeguarded is fully implemented.

We have had a useful debate, but this is not the appropriate Bill in which to have measures such as those suggested in the new clauses. We shall have a chance to return to the matter when we debate the main privatisation Bill later this Session.

**Mr. Dobson:** The Minister has accused me and, I suspect by implication, a number of my hon. Friends—[HON. MEMBERS: "Particularly you."]—oh, particularly me—of scaremongering about pensions. I wish that I had a publicity machine that could create the amount of concern that is felt about the future of pension schemes in the coalfield communities and those places where railway workers are employed. They are worried not because of what I have said but because of what they observe day in, day out, on television, what they hear on the radio and read in newspapers. No scaremongering is required by me to remind people of what happened to the Maxwell pensioners or the legions of pensioners suffering as a result of earlier privatisations so well listed by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney).

People are bothered about City institutions getting their filthy hands on miners' and railway workers' pension funds and need no reminding about the scandal of BCCI or any other City scandals that have arisen in the past few years. The Government are responsible for those because they have not laid down satisfactory rules in advance, through laws passed in the House; nor have they set up adequate schemes to regulate what happens in the City.

If any Tory Members believe that regulation of the City is adequate, they are even more empty-headed than they have seemed in previous debates. Surely no hon. Member believes that regulation of the City is adequate. Even the Secretary of State for Social Security—God help us—thinks that pensions legislation is inadequate and has promised that it will be changed.

If the Minister wants people to stop being scared about what will happen to their pensions as a result of coal and rail privatisation, there is a simple answer. He can accept the new clauses, or if he wants to change them in the House of Lords, he can table new clauses, formulated by his officials, which will provide the sense of security for which people are looking.

If the law is changed, people will be happier; they will still not be entirely happy, however. The Minister has signally failed to reply to the points made in this debate about the adequacy of the advice that the Government are seeking or which the companies may seek. This Bill is mainly about the advice sought, and the Minister has said nothing about that. He still apparently believes it adequate to seek advice from an organisation such as Smith New Court, about which the Department's own inspectors have said:

"They did not understand their responsibilities and they did not make any serious attempt to take proper legal advice."

Apparently the Minister is happy, too, with Ernst and Young, of which the Department's inspectors said:

"The auditors failed to carry out their responsibility as auditors".

They had no other responsibilities, but they did not carry out the ones they had.

Apparently the Minister is happy that the Government should seek advice, or that British Coal or British Rail should seek advice, from Price Waterhouse, about which the Department's inspectors—not scaremongering Dobson—had this to say:

"Their conduct as regards the non-executive directors and the incoming auditors is indefensible."

The Minister still proposes to give himself powers to appoint the indefensible to look after the interests of miners and miner pensioners, of railway workers and their pensioners. It is no good the Minister smiling in his bland way in the hope that all this will go away: it will not.

Miners and rail workers and millions of others think it wrong that Parliament, given the opportunity to protect some pensions, should fail to do so. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will return to this issue over the next few years. We will continue to pursue the Government to ensure that we get justice for present and future pensioners of these two companies.

Tonight, the Minister has offered every assistance short of actual help. I must take him back to the principles of these pension funds. All provision of this sort is money put by for a rainy day—for the miners and their widows and orphans and for the railway workers and their widows and orphans. They do not save up the money for a rainy day for British Coal or for Intergalactic Property Theft plc or for whoever buys British Coal or gets some options on bits of British Rail. The money in the funds was put there to look after present and future pensioners. They are entitled to protection, and if the Government will not provide them with it, we are entitled to say, and they are entitled to believe, that their money is not safe.

We do not think the money is safe. That is why the law needs to be changed, and no ministerial assurance will convince anyone to the contrary. We are a law-making Chamber, not a place for empty assurances. If the Minister wants to do something to end the disquiet among coalfield communities and railway workers and their pensioners, he has an easy answer: change the law.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a second time:—

*The Committee divided:* Ayes 227, Noes 273.

**Division No. 42]** **[8.55 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Blair, Tony |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Blunkett, David |
| Allen, Graham | Boyce, Jimmy |
| Alton, David | Boyes, Roland |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Bradley, Keith |
| Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)* | Bray, Dr Jeremy |
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)* |
| Ashton, Joe | Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* |
| Austin-Walker, John | Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)* |
| Barnes, Harry | Burden, Richard |
| Beith, Rt Hon A. J. | Byers, Stephen |
| Bell, Stuart | Caborn, Richard |
| Benn, Rt Hon Tony | Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)* |
| Bennett, Andrew F. | Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)* |
| Benton, Joe | Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)* |
| Bermingham, Gerald | Campbell-Savours, D. N. |
| Berry, Roger | Canavan, Dennis |
| Betts, Clive | Cann, James |

Carlile, Alexander (Montgomry)
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Dr John (C'p'l'nd)
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'ge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek (B'p Auckland)
Foster, Donald (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George (Knowsley N)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Ms Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Ms Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane (L'p'l Br'g'n)
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon J. (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Ms Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Rt Hon John (M'll'ds E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Ken Eastham and**
**Mr. Thomas McAvoy.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon K. (Mole Valley)
Baker, Nicholas (Dorset North)
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian (S Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Rushcliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shr)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony (Cambs SW)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'rtfdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Tim Boswell and**
**Mr. Timothy Wood.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New Clause 4

### SAFETY RECORD (TRANSFEREES)

'.—In the exercise of their powers under section 1, any relevant corporation or the Secretary of State shall require from any person or body being considered as a transferee details of their safety record and policies.'.—*[Mr. Snape.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Snape:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The clause deals with the safety record of transferees in the coal and rail industries. The safety record in British mines has been hard earned over many years, and our safety record in deep mining is widely regarded as the best in the world. That means that entrants to coal mining in the United Kingdom who have any world-wide experience will inevitably have a worse record than that of British Coal or, if they are completely new to the industry, they will have no record at all. My hon. Friends with greater expertise in the industry will speak about the safety regime following privatisation. We look forward, perhaps with more optimism than we should, to detailed responses from the Minister for Industry.

I must say to the Minister, en passant—to use the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), although that does not strike me as the sort of lingo one normally hears in the pubs and clubs of Bolsover—that we should have more details from Ministers about what they propose. There is little point in their saying that we should wait for the White Paper or the Bill. If the House is to legislate properly, Ministers must at least give us the framework of the legislative proposals that they have in mind for both of industries. Safety in both the coal mining and the railway industries ought to be at the top of their list, as it is at the top of ours. It is not good enough for the Minister to tell us that in due course the Government will produce a White Paper and after that they will introduce a Bill. They should do better than give the impression that privatisation of these great industries amounts to no more than a line in an election manifesto cr an ideological spasm by Tory Back Benchers.

Safety was discussed fairly briefly on Second Reading but in some detail in Committee. Without repeating anything said in the debates on earlier stages of the Bill, I make no apology for returning to this vital matter. Despite all our discussions and despite long debates in Committee, the word "safety" does not appear anywhere in the Bill. I hope that both the Ministers will ensure that that obvious omission is remedied when flesh is put on the bones of privatisation for both the coal mining and the railway industries.

Those of us who have worked in the railway industry are aware that safety was always a top priority. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister for Energy, who has shown some interest in my notes, is really interested in this matter, I will send him a copy of them. That might enable him to make more accurate contributions than those that he has so far made in the debates on the Bill. I shall be delighted to give way if he wishes to intervene. I understand that it is not usual for Parliamentary Private Secretaries to do that, but nor is it usual for my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover to speak French. As we are departing from the norm, we may

*[Mr. Snape]*

as well continue to do so and flout tradition. If the PPS lacks my hon. Friend's confidence—I nearly said sang froid, but thought better of it—we will pass over his lack of contribution.

The British Railways Board chairman said recently:

"Absolute safety is our aim. The Board will not treat any level of accident involving risk of injury as acceptable."

I think that the board has demonstrated its concern about safety, particularly after the tragedy at Clapham, by the expenditure, real and proposed, of £200 million a year.

My first question to the Minister for Public Transport, who I presume will be replying to the debate, is this: who will take over responsibility for safety matters after privatisation? I hope that he will forgive me if I cynically answer my own question by saying that I expect that we shall. There will be no great rush from people outside either of the industries prepared to invest shareholders' cash in maintaining or improving safety records in either industry. Responsibility for the improvement of safety records will inevitably fall on the public sector in the case of the mines and, I suspect, on the passengers in the case of the railways. I suspect that we shall hear from the Minister today how much money the Government are putting into the railway industry. What they do is allow British Rail to borrow even more money, which is then repaid through the highest railway fares in western Europe.

7.15 pm

I hope that I am wrong, but I suspect that the Minister will tell us that the industry will bear some responsibility for safety after privatisation but on the whole it will lie with the Department of Transport. That is not good enough, because when anything goes wrong, the Department of Transport will claim that it was merely overseeing safety matters and was not responsible for safety. I suspect that there will be a similar story from the Department of Trade and Industry in the event of a fatal or serious accident in a mine. Both industries need a single authority to oversee safety if we are to maintain the enviable safety records that they have demonstrated over many years.

Overseeing safety in the railways industry is vital because of the fragmentation of the industry that is likely to take place if the proposals set out in the White Paper are approved by the House. A number of people will be involved and their operating measures will impinge directly on safety. For example, there will be the franchise passenger train operators that I understand the Government wish to see. I say "I understand" because we do not know for sure. Although Ministers have expressed the desire to see other passenger train operators than British Rail, they have not given us any sign of how that will come about. However, those franchise passenger train operators will need to be adequately supervised if a proper safety regime is to be maintained.

There will be other passenger train operators because I understand that the Government also envisage individual train operations, both passenger and freight, being undertaken by the private sector. The difficulty of seeing that just those two groups conform adequately to proper safety regimes can readily be appreciated by those of us who take an interest in these matters.

Then there is the track authority itself. It would be helpful if the Minister could tell us what form he envisages this taking, how it will be composed, whether its members will be appointed by the Secretary of State—another dash of centralisation—and whether they will be selected on the basis of their membership of the Conservative party, as appears to have happened with health authority boards, or on the basis of other, more relevant reasons.

There will be private station owners. Certain Ministers and many Back Benchers, perhaps demonstrating more enthusiasm than brains, have talked about the need to sell railway stations. Any safety regime will need to embrace the activities of such private station owners. I understand that the routine tasks which have traditionally been carried out in the railway industry, such as track maintenance, will be contracted out. How is it envisaged that track maintenance contracts will be properly policed to ensure that track is adequately and safely maintained after privatisation?

I am sure that, under the Government's proposals, train maintenance will also be contracted out. I am referring not just to the cleaning and upkeep of trains—something that the Government have for a long time wished to see their private sector friends involved in—but also to actual maintenance. Presumably that too will be put out to tender, and presumably the private sector will be involved.

Then there are the other people whose duties and activities will impinge on safety—the regulator, whoever he or she is, and, of course the health and safety executive under the railways inspectorate. The nine bodies to which I have referred—there are probably others—will all have responsibilities which impinge directly on safety. We need to hear, if only in outline, how Ministers envisage the duties of those groups being discharged, bearing in mind their safety records and policies—matters to which the new clause refers.

Safety in the mining and railway industries does not come cheap. Birmingham New Street station, which is not far from my constituency, is currently undergoing extensive safety work at the behest of the fire authority. I understand that about £11 million is being spent on that station because someone in the fire authority decided that, as the bulk of the station is below street level, it is an underground station and that, following the King's Cross disaster, safety measures there are considered to be insufficient. I make no great complaint about that, but in my view the safety regime that outside bodies sometimes force on the railway industry is far more stringent than that imposed on other forms of transport.

Less than a mile from Birmingham New Street station is the Digbeth coach station, which I should probably be over-praising if I were to refer to it as a 19th-century slum. To my knowledge, no one has ever burned to death at Birmingham New Street in that terrible way people died at King's Cross, yet I understand that this safety regime is being forced on British Rail by the fire authority at a cost of about £11 million.

It is difficult to imagine any private sector operator accepting such a responsibility. It is difficult to imagine any private sector operator signing a contract for the purchase of Birmingham New Street or any similar InterCity station, or to operate trains through such a station, without securing from the Government of the day a guarantee that such expenditures would not be thrust upon it.

To protect the average motorist from the consequences of his or her own folly, British Rail is incurring similar expenditure on level crossings around the country. In this context, I should say that members of the public who travel by train do not have the benefit of free railway warrants such as are issued to Members of Parliament. Of the amounts spent on level crossings, 50 per cent. must be met from British Rail's own resources. Is it envisaged that the private operators will pick up such bills?

**Mr. Adley:** You must be joking.

**Mr. Snape:** I am not joking. I am not given to humour in respect of such matters. But these are relevant questions. Consider the east coast main line. One can envisage considerable costs falling on the public sector—costs that could not be defrayed from the receipts derived from high-speed trains hurtling at 125 miles per hour over level crossings. This expenditure will have to be defrayed out of the public purse, yet in the context of these proposals the Government have said nothing about it.

**Mr. Milligan:** The hon. Gentleman implies that private rail operators will find it very difficult to afford the necessary safety. Has he studied the situation in Japan, where there is a large public network and an even larger private network? Has he noticed that the fatality records of the two networks there are almost identical—within two decimal points?

**Mr. Snape:** I have studied the situation in Japan, as the hon. Gentleman obviously has not. The myth of the privatisation of Japanese railways is regularly propagated by Ministers and is obviously believed by the more gullible Conservative Back Benchers. Anyone looking at the supposed privatisation of certain railway undertakings previously operated by Japan National Railways will see that it is in no way on the same lines as that envisaged —I have to use the word "envisaged" as we have no real details—by Ministers and certainly by some of the more idealistic Conservative Members.

The rump of the publicly owned British Rail, or taxpayers at large, will be expected to meet the cost of level crossings between London and Edinburgh. I forget how many there are, but it is certainly more than 100. And the British Rail rump to which I have just referred will be bereft of the profits of the east coast main line because of the intervention of organisations like Stagecoach and Virgin Rail. I expect that, well before they sign any contracts, such undertakings will ensure that they are not to be held responsible, financially or in any other way, for those crossings.

**Mr. Milligan:** The hon. Gentleman has not answered my question. I am not talking about the proposed privatisation of the ex-JNR lines; I am talking about lines that have been in private ownership for many years, by which two thirds of Japanese passengers travel.

**Mr. Snape:** I agree that there have been private railways in Japan for many years. Presumably those private railways themselves installed the infrastructure many years ago, and presumably they are responsible for costs of the type about which I am talking. *[Interruption.]* Once again the hon. Member for Colne Valley, the Minister's Private Parliamentary Secretary, with fingers in various orifices, makes some odd noises. I should think that the system in Japan works as I have indicated. If the hon. Gentleman has some evidence to the contrary, or some personal experience of how the system there works, let him break his vow of silence.

**Mr. Graham Riddick** (Colne Valley): It was a good question.

**Mr. Snape:** It may have been a good one, but it was not very relevant.

The point that I am making to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), who intervened quite properly, is that in the case of British Rail that is not the point from which we are starting. What we are talking about is the introduction of private services on an existing publicly owned railway. I suspect that the rump of the publicly owned railway will remain responsible for the costs that I have outlined, and that the new jazzily painted privately owned railway companies will avoid any such costs.

My view—I hope that I can take the hon. Gentleman will me—is that, at the very least, the bodies responsible for operating the new privately owned railways should share those costs. After all, their trains will go over the same 100-odd level crossings as will those left in the public sector. What worries me—I am sorry if I have said this too often, but I see a glimmer of understanding in the hon. Gentleman's eyes——

**Mr. Dobson:** Ever the optimist.

**Mr. Snape:** Ever the optimist—perhaps I kid myself. What worries me is that these costs, which will increase with increasing train speeds, will continue to fall on the public sector as, of course, will all signalling costs arising from modernisation schemes and from the running of high speed trains.

Of course, it is not just a matter of the east coast main line—other areas should be close to the hearts of Conservative Members. In Committee, we discussed who would pay the cost of the proposed resignalling of the London-Tilbury-Southend line, which attracts an enormous number of complaints—usually, but not exclusively, since the general election, from Conservative Members. The Minister agreed, although none to graciously at the time, that the taxpayer would pay the resignalling costs. Presumably, a private operator will reap the benefits of that public expenditure when it operates certain services at certain times of the day on that line.

7.30 pm

Those matters properly concerned us in Committee and they properly concern us today. As yet, we have had no satisfactory responses from Ministers, either in Committee or since. We look forward—this could be the optimist in me again—to hearing something about that from the Minister later.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): It is not only Labour Members who are sceptical about privatisation. In the negotiations on the rolling stock for the Leeds-Bradford electrification, the Industrial Bank of Scotland—part of the private sector and believing in the market place—decided that the marketplace was not a good enough guarantee for the leasehold payments from the private sector. It asked the Government to guarantee the payments. That is hardly evidence from the private sector of confidence in privatisation.

**Mr. Snape:** I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity in putting that point on the record. The private

*[Mr. Snape]*

sector remains firmly unconvinced about any guarantees for the Leeds-Bradford line, despite a speech from the Minister suggesting that, whatever happened to the passenger transport executive and its responsibilities, something would be done to accommmodate the costs of leasing electric trains. Obviously, the private sector does not accept the Minister's assurances. Perhaps he will strengthen them when he replies to the debate.

I am sure that the Minister agrees that whoever operates the trains between Leeds and Bradford—I suspect that in the end it will be the taxpayer, the poll tax payer or the council tax payer—and whatever that company's safety record, the electrification of the line is well worth while and meets even the onerous costings laid down by the Treasury. It should go ahead.

The safety record of transferees is one with which the Opposition are quite properly concerned. Nothing that we have yet heard has assuaged that concern. I hope that for once the Minister will tell us, at least in outline, what he has in mind so that we can ensure that safety, which has always been of top priority in both industries, is maintained.

**Mr. Redmond:** I shall make only a few brief but important points about safety, both in the mines and on British Rail. I used to serve on the Doncaster area safety committee, a sub-committee of the area consultative committee until it was decided that it should be a committee in its own right. For three years on the trot, Doncaster held the national record for making the most safety improvements. I am pleased that I was able to play a small part in bringing that about.

Safety is an important factor in the mines. Miners cannot afford to relax for a minute or they are liable to lose life or limb. They must be on the ball. It is also important that the mines regulations are adhered to strictly. From time to time, the NUM has refused to defend people who have broken the regulations. It is 100 per cent. in support of any safety recommendations and regulations that protect the miners.

It is to be regretted that since the miners' strike British Coal has adopted a severe attitude and will not allow the NUM to play a full role in safety matters in a number of pits. The old 1-2-3 inspection teams used to operate effectively in the pits. Members of the NUM would inspect a particular district to ensure that it was complying with the rules and regulations. The NUM wants to continue to do that, but British Coal is reluctant to agree.

If inspectors are allowed to do their job, they may find all sorts of faults within the present system. That would interfere with production, and British Coal does not want that. Those inspectors fulfil an important role and they should be allowed to continue without interference from the management. I hope that the Minister will take note of that point.

If we want to continue the excellent safety record that the NUM and British Coal have built up over the years, we must carefully consider any interference with the 1908 Act. That Act was put on the statute book for an important reason—to stop the horrific accidents in the mines. Not just one or two people were killed; it was often several dozen people. It is important that we do not return to those days. Unless the Bill is watertight, when the private sector takes over the mines it will disregard safety because it interferes with production. Whether a single pit or a group of pits, it is an important point.

The Minister has previously referred to registered disabled people within the industry. No doubt at some time in the future he will reply to my letter to him on that matter. British Coal is breaking the law, yet the Government sit back and do nothing about it. Disabled people have a right to a job in the industry and British Coal always used to have tremendous good will towards those who were injured in accidents. It found them jobs both underground and on the surface. That is no longer the case and British Coal gets rid of those people. In fact, if someone is above 50 he is pushed down the road with a redundancy payment.

I wish briefly to mention two points about British Rail. There have been a number of accidents where passengers have fallen out of train doors. There have been fatalities and the incidents have been investigated. However, British Rail is sitting back and doing nothing, even though the evidence points in a certain direction. I believe that British Rail sought to suppress the evidence and to prevent its being made public. If British Rail is willing to do that as a nationalised industry, one shudders to think what a private-sector railway will get up to.

Also important is the multi-track signalling equipment that is dotted throughout the country. About eight systems are in operation. One is Scotland fails at times to trigger the signal that there is a train on the track. The signalman looks at his equipment and sees a clear line, when in fact a goods train could have come to a halt on it. In those circumstances, a fast passenger train could be let through. A number of accidents have occurred in that way.

Before any privatisation, a one-track system should be operating throughout the country. Having been delayed on one occasion at Peterborough and diverted around the system, we were informed on arriving in a particular station, "So far and no farther, because there is no driver to take you to King's Cross." A driver is only used to his own section and only recognises his own signalling equipment. A driver should be able to take a train from one end of the country to the other, guided by the same signalling equipment. It is important for safety's sake for the Minister to take the steps necessary to bring that about before any privatisation.

**Mr. Adley:** The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was rather harsh on my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan). I am sure that he did not realise that my hon. Friend is very well versed in the subject. He was pointing out that in Japan, where private-sector railways have operated for a long time, the Government insist that private railway safety standards are exactly as high—no better and no worse—as those that pertain to Japanese National Railways. That has long been the case and it is why, unsurprisingly, both sectors have a similar safety record.

My hon. Friend said that if any private-sector companies eventually run trains on Britain's railways, the House must ensure that the safety standards then applicable are identical to those observed by British Rail. I believe that was my hon. Friend's point.

**Mr. Milligan** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Adley:** My hon. Friend nods. I trust that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East shares that belief.

**Mr. Snape:** I am amazed if the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) considered that my reply to him was in any way discourteous. I said that he put a perfectly fair point. If the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) thought that I was getting annoyed, or that I was discourteous, he ought to see me on a bad day.

**Mr. Adley:** I thought that the hon. Gentleman was looking for trouble where none existed. I am only suggesting that when it comes to rail safety, and to many other issues, a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends will keep a wary eye on what the Government get up to in the months ahead.

The British Railways Board is committed to running a safe railway; to improving safety in the design, installation and maintenance of rolling stock, infrastructure and buildings, by staff and suppliers; to training and supervising staff and contractors to ensure safety; to adopting the best safety practices from other industries; and unfailingly meeting the legal requirements on health and safety that are placed upon it.

In due course, we will want to know that any future legislation will contain a clear commitment to applying those same rules to any private-sector company that seeks to run trains. We will want to know also who will be responsible for implementing safety rules and for ensuring adherence to them.

One of our difficulties is that this is merely a paving Bill, so perhaps it is inappropriate to have too lengthy a debate on issues that we will consider fully when the final legislation comes before us. However, given that new clause 4 has been selected for debate, I will make a couple of further points.

We have a record of more than 150 years of stringent safety rules applied by the House to the railways, both when they were in the private sector and when they became nationalised. It was right to do so, and I seek assurances from the Government that those strict safety requirements will be maintained. It is a matter of regret that, as usual, we operate double standards in respect of safety, as in other spheres, when dealing with rail passenger safety, as opposed to safety for those who use the roads.

I remind the House that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport has already given an assurance that should satisfy the Opposition and anyone else at this stage in our legislative proceedings. When Standing Committee A debated the Bill at its fourth sitting on 16 June, I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for one simple assurance:

> "As this legislation proceeds, will he assure us now or at an appropriate time that, whatever arrangements may be made in the future to allow, encourage or enable operators other than British Rail to operate trains, in no circumstances will standards of safety lower than those that we, in this House, have for many generations laid upon both public and private sector operators of our railways be permitted to apply to any other company? I hope that my hon. Friend can satisfy that simple request."

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport replied:

> "I shall be extremely brief and give my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) that assurance."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 16 June 1992; c. 107.]

That was short, sharp and succinct, and to the point.

7.45 pm

In an earlier debate, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) got very hot under the collar with my hon. Friend the Minister, over the difference between undertakings given in the House and legislation, but all right hon. and hon. Members know that we are merely debating a paving Bill. In due course, many of us will want to probe further and to satisfy ourselves. We will want to know whether the financial constraints placed on British Rail—such as the insistence on running single tracks when double tracks were operated in the past—have or have not been a safety factor. At some subsequent stage, that matter is one which I, the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East and others will want to probe.

For the present, I am satisfied that we already have an assurance that safety requirements will be built in to the final legislation. I assure the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East that I will be keeping a beady eye on my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

**Mr. Tony Benn** (Chesterfield): I have the honour to represent a mining constituency. As a former Secretary of State for Energy, one of the accomplishments that pleased me most was my ability to bring the mining inspecotorate into the Health and Safety Executive. As those who know anything about the mining industry will appreciate, safety was always a major factor in influencing the Miners Federation of Great Britain, and later the National Union of Mineworkers.

Keir Hardie was elected as a Scottish miner 100 years ago this month, and I had the honour of having his grand-daughter and great grand-daughter to tea today. When I contemplate this legislation, I realise that we are being taken back to the very beginning—even to repealing the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908. Public ownership of the mines was motivated largely by the pressure from miners and a desire to raise safety levels.

Aneurin Bevan used to ask, "Why look in the crystal ball when it is written in the book?" I refer to a document that has been in my possession for 58 years. In 1935, as a child of 10, I canvassed in a constituency, and I found in my archives a leaflet relating to mining safety issued that year by the Miners Federation of Great Britain. It is headed "The Price of Coal", and goes on to say that 7,839 miners were killed and 1,200,042 injured between 1927 and 1934. The dead included

> "231 boys under 16, 320 lads between 16 and 18, and 294 lads between 18 and 20. The killed and injured include 199,612 lads and boys under 20 . . . The output of coal per man shift has increased by nearly a third since 1924, but wages . . . have gone down by nearly a sixth . . . the miners claim an extra two shillings per shift. They offer to abide by the decision of independent arbitrators. The coalowners have refused independent arbitration. The 'national' Government has . . . refused to take action. The 'national' Government is always on the side of the coalowners."

Those figures are more relevant to safety than a comparison between the private and public railways in Japan. This country had a long history of exploitation of miners for profit before public ownership, at the cost of lives and safety. Many miners fear that they will pay a heavy price for a return to privatisation, when the coal industry will compete with those of Colombia and South Africa and orimulsion and other hideous materials will be brought in. Their lives, wages and living conditions will be sacrificed.

The facts that I have just read out relate to a time before nationalisation. They explain why the miners wanted nationalisation so much. Whatever criticism may be made of the Coal Board—especially of British Coal, the way in which it has been run under MacGregor and the thugs whom the Government put in to crush the NUM—the fact remains that, in the context of safety, the relationship

*[Mr. Tony Benn]*

between the old Coal Board and the NUM was very good. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) said that it had deteriorated since the strike, but that was a product of the miners' defeat in 1985.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): The right hon. Gentleman is presenting us with an historical scenario. I accept that I have not the same experience of a subject in which he has a great and continuing interest. Does he not agree, however, that the legislative control of safety in industries of every kind, from aviation to oil exploration, has moved on? Why should the position necessarily be different in the mining industry?

**Mr. Benn:** The hon. Gentleman is right. We have moved on—backwards. When we debated industrial safety before the general election, Mr. Brandon-Bravo—a Conservative Member who subsequently lost his seat—asked what connection hours of work had with safety. I interrupted him at that point. If a Concorde pilot spent 18 hours a day flying, would that constitute "moving on"? Safety and hours of work are integral: that is why so many protections exist.

I do not expect to convert the Minister. I am using *Hansard*, as I always do, to inform those who read my speech of what they will not read in *The Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express;* that is the purpose of speaking in the House. The Government are winding back safeguards for safety, wages and conditions that it took years of struggle to establish.

British Rail workers have told me—this applies equally to pit workers—that if they report safety hazards, they could be dismissed on the ground that their evidence might damage the company. Safety factors that should be brought into the public domain—if there is an accident, people will ask, "Why did we not know?"—are being suppressed in the interests of the railways. That will happen even more when the railways become a private enterprise.

Let me alert those who read my speech to a way to avoid dismissal. If they petition the House of Commons about safety matters, they cannot be sacked by their employers, because they will be covered by privilege. I am a member of the Privileges Committee; it is not the most exciting Committee on which to serve, as it seems to be concerned chiefly with ensuring that an Official Secrets Act governs the work of Committees as tightly as such an Act controls Government business. Since being appointed to the Committee, however, I have secured a victory in regard to privilege.

A Birmingham shop steward opposed the road race there, which was part of legislation promoted by Birmingham city council, and he petitioned the House. A Birmingham Member drew attention to what had happened: the shop steward had been transferred by the Birmingham city corporation because he had complained about a Bill promoted by his employers. I argued his case strongly in the Privileges Committee, and I am happy to say that the Committee decided that Birmingham city council had been guilty of a breach of privilege. If people who work on the railways or in the mines have any doubts about safety provision and fear dismissal for reporting those doubts to the press, they should approach the House of Commons. Any Member of Parliament can present a petition, and the petitioner cannot be sacked as a result.

I never thought that privilege—a mediaeval arrangement—would be of use to the modern generation, but, as the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) said earlier, we have moved on. We have moved on to a point at which ancient safeguards are being dismantled, and we must return to even earlier safeguards. I undertake to provide workers with petition forms, and to read out their petitions so that they cannot be sacked.

We are going back to the days of "blood on coal". That was the phrase that we used to hear: when people said that coal was more expensive after nationalisation, I heard miners say in the House in 1950, "There is no blood on the coal now." The Bill aims to increase profit at the expense of safety and at the expense of the wages and conditions of railwaymen and miners. It is a bad Bill, but, if we can put the case across, people will at least understand what it is really about and will be able to protect themselves from the consequences.

**Mr. Keith Hill** (Streatham): My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is right. In recent years, a new rule has been introduced into the British Rail rule book—rule 114(b), known to rail workers as the gagging clause. That rule threatens any rail worker who publicises a defect in the railway system with disciplinary action up to the point of dismissal. It is a scandal that such an infringement of civil liberties has been introduced into the rule book, and I hope that it will be rescinded under privatisation. I fear that that will not happen, but Opposition Members have always made it clear that its withdrawal would be one of our first tasks in government.

New clause 4 rightly draws attention to the rigorous safety regime that will be necessary after privatisation. In the railway industry, the closest attention will have to be paid to the operating qualifications of potential owners and franchisees. It is self-evident that, in this country and in Europe as a whole—indeed, worldwide—the experience of the private sector in railway operation is extremely limited. Railway operation is potentially a highly dangerous business, and this country is fortunate enough to have some of the highest standards. There can be no question of any relaxation of those standards; that is why we need close scrutiny of, and the strictest assurances about, the safety record and the policies of potential operators.

In Committee, we had the benefit of detailed discussion about safety matters relating to the railways. On behalf of the Government, the Minister for Energy gave the Opposition a number of reassurances in response to their questions about future railway safety arrangements. Those assurances were reasonably encouraging, and I am grateful to the Minister for Public Transport for his prompt response in writing to me about other matters of concern, as he promised in Committee. I have drawn those replies to the attention of my sponsoring union, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

Although we remain opposed to the privatisation project as a whole, we are in some measure reassured at this stage by the replies that we have received. There remains, however, one important matter on which clarification is still required. I shall turn to it shortly and look forward to the Minister's response.

The Government have now offered various forms of undertakings as to the safety requirements that they envisage in paving the way for the possible transfer of ownership and any new franchising arrangements.

8 pm

**Mr. Cryer:** Did the Minister at any stage say that there would be no legislative attempt to water down absolute legislative provisions and to govern those provisions by the words "so far as reasonably practicable"? By the insertion of those words, the Government remove absolute standards built into the legislation over the years. That is scandalous. My guess is that the Minister will not give such a guarantee because that is what the Government want to do.

**Mr. Hill:** I recognise my hon. Friend's wide and long experience and interest in the railway industry. To the best of my recollection, those assurances were not given. In the discussions and debates on the substantive measure that we expect in the autumn, we shall have to make sure that those provisions are included in the Bill.

In response to the concern which has been expressed at reports that the Government were applying pressure on British Rail to complete its safety standards by the end of September this year, I am pleased to say that they have stated clearly that that is not the case. In response to the concern about whether potential operators will be required to meet specific safety standards, the Minister for Public Transport wrote to me saying that those specific standards will be required. I was pleased to hear that. The Minister has also said that those specific standards will be monitored and enforced. Given the staff shortages and the burden of work facing British Rail's audit department, there was concern about this aspect. It is to be assumed that the Government will ensure that the monitoring and enforcement agencies will be properly financed and properly equipped for the new task before them.

We have also raised questions about the date on which access of non-British Rail operators to the system will take place—again against the background of reports that the Government envisage that such access will occur from 1 January 1993. The Minister has explained that this date applies only to a specific and limited category of international services affected by European Community directive 91/440—certain international groupings of railway undertakings and operators of international combined transport in all European Community countries. When the Minister wrote to me, he also said:

"More general rights of access for operators of domestic services will not be available until after the main privatisation legislation has received Royal Assent and the necessary regulatory schemes established."

If we are to have a privatised railway system, that is certainly what we would expect Government policy to be. It is therefore in this context and in the context of the concerns set out in new clause 4 that I finally seek clarification of the time scale in relation to the introduction of new operators to the network.

In the report presented to the Secretary of State by the Health and Safety Executive entitled, "Ensuring Safety on a Liberalised Railway", there is a reference on page 6 to the Government's intention to liberalise access in three phases. The second and third phases relate to the need to implement European Community Directive 91/440 and to the Government's larger plan for full liberalisation, with both of which we are familiar. However, the first phase, and this is central to new clause 4, involves a request made to British Rail by the Government—I emphasise "by the Government"—to co-operate voluntarily with Government policy by allowing new, independent operators on to the network.

The logic of that phasing appears to mean that British Rail is being asked to permit access prior to the enactment of the legislation. I accept that the legislation in question could be legislation implementing the European Community directive and not legislation leading to full liberalisation, but there remains a general uncertainty, notwithstanding the Minister's written reassurances that British Rail may be required to allow domestic operators on to the system from 1 January 1993.

The Minister is aware that according to the Health and Safety Executive the process of reworking the railways' current operational and technical standards, to be applied to all operators, will take until 1994. It is widely recognised that this is an enormously complex and time-consuming process. The Health and Safety Executive alludes to the fact that it took a team of British Rail engineers no fewer than six months to write the engineering specification for the introduction of the Foster Yeoman locomotives, the only example so far of a private concern running operational services on the network.

**Mr. Milligan:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong when he says that Foster Yeoman is the only company operating a private service. Other companies do that. Tiger Rail and a number of other services, such as the Orient Express and the Scottish Highland service, are run by private companies.

**Mr. Hill:** I was referring to Foster Yeoman's involvement in the operation of locomotives and to the fact that that is the most expensive operation of locomotives on British Rail's network. There is also expensive and extensive running of privately owned wagons on the system, but locomotive operation is primarily in the hands of Foster Yeoman.

**The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I anticipate that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will be winding up the debate if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it may help if I respond briefly to that point. Events have moved on since my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport's letter to British Rail about voluntary access. He never envisaged that British Rail would do other than provide the drivers for those trains, but I can confirm that we propose to publish a White Paper and to introduce legislation. Access to the domestic railway network by franchised trains and third party operators must wait until we have a proper regime for charging for track access and until we have received the advice of the Health and Safety Executive and the commission on the safe operation of the railways.

**Mr. Hill:** I am most grateful to the Minister. The purpose of my speech may well be said to have been fulfilled by that reassurance. The framework of the new safety regime on British Rail must lie in the hands of British Rail officials whose skill and experience will not be available to new operators. How could it be? That is why the question of the date of access is vital to many of those

*[Mr. Hill]*

involved in the railway industry. That is why both they and I welcome the precise reassurance that we have received on this.

**Mr. Paddy Tipping** (Sherwood):

"The safety and health of mineworkers must be the paramount consideration in the mining industry."

Those are not my words but those of the Minister for Energy, speaking in Nottinghamshire only a few weeks ago. They are supported by the management and work force of British Coal.

British Coal has the best safety record in the world. It is twice as good as Germany's and five times better than that of the United States. It is between 50 and 100 times safer to work for British Coal than in South Africa, Russia, Colombia or China. It is important to realise that the safety record of private contractors operating in the same mines as British Coal is twice as bad.

British Coal's safety record is second to none, but it can be improved, and in parts of the coalfields people have worked to achieve that improvement. About two years ago, the safety record of the Nottinghamshire group was one of the poorest in the country; today, it is the best. In the past year, there have been no fatal accidents in the Nottinghamshire group. There has been a 34 per cent. improvement in the three-day accident period, and a 24 per cent. target has been set for the current financial year. It appears that that target will be met, because in the first two months of the year the figure is 60 per cent. better than for the same period last year.

Within two years, the Nottinghamshire group's safety record has gone from being one of the poorest in the country to the best. It is important to focus on why that has happened. In part, it is due to good new equipment —investment in plant and equipment is important—but it is important to recognise the real reason: British Coal training and educating the work force and taking time to work with men so that their safety and the safety of their colleagues is seen to be important. That is the real cost to the organisation, but it is an asset in terms of lack of injury and of fatalities.

That has been achieved by creating a corporate culture of safety, where everybody works to achieve safety. It is important to note that it has not been done by policing or by the mines inspectorate setting high standards.

**Mr. Eggar:** I completely agree with what the hon. Gentleman says: Nottinghamshire has a tremendous record. He said that the benefit was a loss of injuries and fatalities, which is a tremendous benefit, but does not good safety training in turn lead to more productive mineworkers and mining methods? It is not only a good investment for people's health but a good economic investment.

**Mr. Tipping:** It certainly is, but the problem facing the industry is the drive for productivity. Pits throughout the country increased their productivity by 100 per cent. in the past five years. Men have been removed from the workplace to be trained. Gains have been made elsewhere, but the cost of that training is a loss of productivity.

That training record is under attack. The pit deputies' role is under threat. The 10th draft of the administrative package is out for consultation and debate. The real tension is about that new draft. At present, the pit deputies and the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers look after safety. Their role will be changed radically from being whistle-blowers concerned about maintaining safety in the pit to being involved in productivity. There are clear dangers in that confused role. As the Health and Safety Commission has recognised in writing to the Minister, privatisation poses British Coal and the deep-coal industry a real challenge. It is clear to me —I think that it is clear to everybody who works in the industry—that under privatisation productivity and profit will have to increase even more.

8.15 pm

I do not know what the final shape of the industry will be in 18 months' time, but it is clear to me that the remaining collieries will have to increase output and profit. The rush to profit and increased productivity will lead to corner-cutting, because men's jobs will depend entirely on their pit being a viable entity. The new owners of the industry should have to comply with the high safety standards that are set by British Coal.

Those concerns are echoed in the letter from the Health and Safety Commission to the Minister. It says:

"It will be essential to ensure the continuance of the strong safety culture which exists in mining."

It points to the need for increased regulation.

What I want to argue, and what people in the industry understand, is that it is not regulation that makes safe pits but investment in training and education for safety. That will be under threat even more, depending on the final shape of the privatised coal industry. The high standards in the mining industry are set by British Coal; it is the standard bearer of the world. If the privatised industry is not a unitary but a binary model or a model with many other parts, safeguarding those high standards will be extremely difficult, and later this year we shall have to discuss how the mines rescue service will fit into a privatised industry and how information about accidents and injuries can be disseminated across the earth. Who will do the work that British Coal does on maintaining good-quality safety standards and research into them?

Those are all key issues. The real threat is the knowledge among the work force and management that they must ensure a super-productive privatised industry. If men struggle to save and maintain their jobs, and if their job depends entirely on the output and profit of their colliery, we shall be in danger of returning to the bad old days when there really was blood on the coals.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): An accident that took place on the British Rail Edinburgh-Glasgow line at Polmont was caused by a lack of fencing, which allowed cattle to stray on the line. My question is exceedingly succinct. British Rail has an enormous mileage of line through agricultural land. It maintains fencing and suitable barriers to prevent agricultural livestock from going on to rail. Normally, it has been successful. Who will bear the considerable costs in future?

My second question is that raised in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). Who will be responsible for the British Transport police and to whom will they report—to the Department of Transport or to the Home Office, or is there to be a relationship between the transport police and the private operators? I have a particular reason for asking because two of my constituents raised that matter.

I was not a member of the Committee, and those who were not members should be brief when called to speak. I end by saying that I hope that the Government will consider carefully what Jimmy Knapp, the general secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, said at the end of last week in Llandudno about a proper safety code. I leave it at that.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** As an ex-miner, I can say that miners have earned the right to demand safety. My forefathers and many people in the mining industry paid a high price for the legislation that has been passed, even by this Parliament. We seem to learn only after disasters. We were continually upgrading legislation, supposedly to make life easier, but sometimes legislation was not enacted because there was no organisation to represent the workers. In other words, there was no trade union strong enough to ensure that people who were victimised for raising safety matters were protected; but that is in the past.

To many people, privatisation means unsafe working, poorer health and hygiene and a high accident rate staring them in the face. At the moment, none of the miners in the privatised mines have self-rescuers, which belong to the miners. They were introduced after a fire in the Michael colliery in Fife when men died of suffocation from the inhalation of fumes. If they had had the self-rescuers, they could have gone through the smoke-filled atmosphere into safety and fresh air. The device operates for approximately an hour. An hour will enable a fit man to cover a fair distance underground to reach safety.

Self-rescuers are worn on the miner's belt and belong to him. Privatised mines cannot afford them or do not have them, although British Coal has. What will happen to self-rescuers? Their upkeep and cost are part and parcel of the running of a colliery, but they are a glaring example of what might happen after privatisation. Will the standards be lowered or will the privatised mines come up to the standard of British Coal?

Many other activities have been mentioned, and I refer specifically to those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping). What will happen to the rescue brigades which, like the fire brigades, employ people full time? People are on call for a disaster or for any other incident. In between their activities, they maintain their high standards and train people who volunteer as local, part-time rescue brigades. In other words, they maintain the very high standards of a good organisation. What will happen to the first-aid teams and the research and development for new methods?

New materials are being introduced into collieries. The disaster to which I referred was caused by polyurethane being used as filler in gaps in the roof. It was discovered to be highly inflammable, and we all know what happened when it was used in upholstery. It was used in furniture for ordinary houses and people died not from the heat of the fire but from the fumes. Underground, it is 100 times worse, because of the confined area and because there is only one source of air.

Another important aspect is the role of individual members. At the moment, we have workmen's inspectors. By law, they are entitled to examine their own place of work and to involve a particular manager when doing their one, two, three, inspections. Their investigative report must be displayed at the colliery. Within seven days the manager must reply to any comments and act accordingly. A copy of the report also goes to Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines. In other words, such an inspection is not merely a matter of habit and is not done at the whim of a manager. It is enshrined in the Coal Mines Act 1911 that a person has the right to have his workplace examined and a report sent to the colliery manager for Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines to comment. The trade union also receives a copy of the report in order for its full-time mines' inspectors to follow it up. It is a foolproof method to eliminate accidents before they happen. Every part of the colliery is open for inspection.

We—meaning the trade union movement—take second place to no one in spending money and effort on training our workmen to be competent inspectors, in conjunction with Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines and the management. Will that go by the board after privatisation? Will it be diluted? Will new legislation be introduced?

Albert Wheeler went to the United States and returned with a plan. He found that British machinery for extracting coal was having a phenomal success in long wall production, which was new at the time, as was German machinery of the same type. It was said to bring fantastic production which was colossal in comparison to ours. However, there was a price to be paid. The miners had to go in at the height of the coal. If the coal was 4·5 ft high, that was the height of the roadway. There was no extraction of rock to allow a man to stand up. When he went down the mine or into the slant mine, he did not stand upright until he emerged from the pit.

Even the roof was held up roof bolting—not by girders or props, but by screwing a bolt into the roof. That is putting it crudely, although it was much more technical. I assure the House that it would terrify anyone who went down the mine, because there was no visible means of support. However, men worked—and do work—in those conditions for seven days a week in 12-hour shifts with huge bonuses for the workers at the point of production. Everyone else is paid peanuts, to use American phraseology.

Mr. Wheeler thinks that such a system was marvellous. Lung disease—or black lung, as it is known in America—was at its highest because of the dust count and, in addition, some roadways or sections in the collieries were single roadways. There was not even an ingang or ausgang, as it is called in mining terms. There was only one way in, and we know what happens when a one-way road is closed. Safety was pushed to one side, and that is not an example we should follow. The industry does not want to implement the Wheeler report, or any similar plan.

I want the industry transferred from public ownership with safety absolutely guaranteed. The safety measures which we take for granted must continue, with no dilution of the role of Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines. There must be no dilution of the role of the deputies or of any other senior officials connected with safety or production in the collieries.

8.30 pm

I said in Committee that safety does not always mean that one does not get production; the truth is the opposite. Safety means production. The Piper Alpha disaster in the North sea was a disaster for production. Of course, it was a bigger disaster for the people who died and for their dependents.

There are lessons to be learned. We do not need to tell members of my organisation the facts. We must tell the management and the people who are pushing for

maximum production. I am pleased to see the results of some of our activities. I hope that our efforts will rub off on Conservative Members, on the Minister and even on the Government.

I cannot say enough about safety. As I said in Committee, there is a plaque to Alexander Macdonald, who was a Liberal Member of Parliament in the 1890s. There was no Labour party in those days. Few Liberals know about coal mining, but Alexander Macdonald did. He was a unique individual. The plaque was put up because he brought about legislation that the miners wanted, deserved and needed. We do not put plaques up to dead people for no reason, although I must admit that, when I see some of the plaques in Westminster abbey and in other places, I wonder. Miners put up the plaque to Alexander Macdonald and they are practical individuals who appreciate people who help them. I hope that Alexander Macdonald will not be forgotten, either by the miners or by the Government.

**Mr. McCartney:** It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke). He has been a friend of my father's for almost 30 years in the trade union movement. My earliest memory of my hon. Friend and some of his colleagues in the National Union of Mineworkers dates back to 1959. In my own town of Kirkintilloch, there was a mining disaster through which eight young lads at my school and in the surrounding area lost their fathers. The Auchingeich disaster was caused by a fire in a fanbelt which then engulfed the whole colliery. No one came out of the colliery. On the Sunday after the disaster, I walked with all the community behind a huge cross and stood by the pit gang looking down on the colliery. As a youngster, I took in what had happened and what could happen in future to that community.

When we talk about safety for the mining community, we talk from the experience of our people, not from what we have read in books. Every change in the law in the past 100 years has come about not because of compassion or because of argument by articulate miners through their union, but because of massive disasters.

This debate concerns the historical protection of the mining industry. It is unique in the industries of Britain because of the regulations that have been introduced not to protect the employers' rights in law, but to protect the employees' rights in law. That is not the case in any other British industry.

Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc, Act 1974 and under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988, employers should take steps to avoid risk and to improve conditions. That can be done by weighing costs against benefits to the employers. Outside the mining industry, the health and safety of industrial and office workers is balanced by an analysis of cost benefits and what the employer believes is an appropriate risk. They consider whether it is more appropriate to avoid the risk by taking action to improve the position or whether the cost of taking those appropriate steps is far too high. When the employers have carried out a risk assessment, if they believe that the risk is worth taking in financial terms, it will be taken. That is not the position in the mining industry and we do not want it to be the position after privatisation.

The new clause is vital. I do not mean to criticise my hon. Friends, but I believe that they have been a little shy in coming forward in the way in which they have phrased it. I hope that the Minister will accept the new clause. By accepting it or by agreeing to introduce a more appropriately extensive amendment in another place, the Government will reassure the industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has been less than generous to himself in the wording of the new clause. There are four clear areas that the new clause should cover if it is to mean anything for the railway and mining industries after privatisation. First, the companies concerned must issue a general statement about their approach to health, safety and welfare. It must be made clear that health and safety are as important as production in terms of the organisation's objectives. That should be a statutory requirement.

Secondly, there must be a clear chain of duty in the organisation from the employers to the employees concerning employees' rights under that general policy. Every employee must know whom to consult on safety matters. Someone must be designated at the point of employment to represent employees on health and safety matters, whether those employees work underground, above ground, in railway workshops or in the railway network. Those individuals should have statutory rights to training and to time off with pay for that training.

Thirdly, employers must describe the detailed steps that they are taking to eliminate hazards in each job. There must be a statement about the general environment, including keeping roadways and gangways clear, and keeping doorways clean and in a safe condition. That statement must also include details about noise levels, lighting and welfare facilities. It is vital that such matters should be included in the Bill. There must be details about each machine, substance and process in the pit or railway workshop. Without that, the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act cannot be operated effectively on behalf of the employees.

Contractors will increasingly be brought into the mining industry. For workers such as contractors and those on night shifts, there must be clear statements that those who work in special conditions are also covered by the general policy statement on health and safety and that they are also represented by the designated health and safety officer on site. There must be a right for employees to be informed, and to be involved in training and refresher courses introduced by the employer.

Fourthly, consultation is vital. There must be a continuing commitment to the assessment of risk, to the revising of the assessment of risk and to the updating procedures and policies to eliminate risk. If the new clause is to mean anything in reality, those four basic requirements must be included. That is not simply a debating point for the Chamber and it is not enough for us all to go away happy in the knowledge that we have fought the good fight. Fighting the good fight here is irrelevant to people who are 600 or 700 ft down, to people who are working in a railway workshop or to people who are working with substances that can be hazardous to health.

One of the main reasons why I and my hon. Friends in the safety lobby of the Labour movement are concerned about the Government is that, from November 1991 until recently, there have been various announcements by Ministers and hints from British Coal that there will be changes to underground working hours. A regulation on working hours has been in force since 1908.

It ill becomes the Government to say that the reason for change is that they must implement European legislation. What a cheek! The Government have fought tooth and nail about implementing European health and safety regulations that benefit workers. They seem to believe that they can amend the one regulation that will assist the new privatised industry to undermine working conditions for underground workers. That is totally unacceptable and the Minister should give a clear commitment that no British Government will introduce legislation or commit themselves to regulations from Europe that will undermine the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908.

Whenever the Prime Minister answers questions about Europe at the Dispatch Box, he makes it clear that the House will be responsible for our legislation. If that is the case, the Minister for Energy must make it clear that he will not implement anything that will undermine that position.

The Health and Safety Commission proposes to undermine regulations about silicosis. Silicosis is one of the most dangerous hazards known to miners. It is black lung and it causes pneumoconiosis. Each year, thousands of industrial workers die, are severely injured or have to retire early from work as a result of the effects of silicosis. Until the announcement by the HSC, we had the strongest anti-silicosis legislation in Europe. However, harmonising downwards is not acceptable because, over the next decade or more, thousands of workers will leave work early because of black lung disease, pneumoconiosis and cancer-related diseases.

We are not prepared to accept an undermining of those principles. Will the Minister for Energy agree to meet a deputation of Opposition Members? If necessary, we will work with the Government to ensure that the proposals of the HSC which, after all, is supposed to represent workers, are not implemented and to ensure that the present legislation is protected. Workers would then be able to go to work even in dangerous conditions and have at least the minimum standard required to ensure that they leave the pit in one piece at the end of a shift and, at the end of their working lives, they do not die from black lung disease or pneumoconiosis.

**Mr. Clapham:** New clause 4 is appropriate for British Rail and British Coal, but I want to relate my remarks to British Coal. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) eloquently explained how the safety culture in mining had been brought about from the bitter experiences in the inter-war years to the position after 1947 when market forces were largely mitigated within the new National Coal Board. As a result of that, the safety record was improved.

British Coal is now the safest deep coal mining industry in the world. That record has evolved through the co-operation of the work force and the management. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield identified the strains that caused the safety position to deteriorate in the inter-war years and no doubt they will re-emerge following privatisation.

Since 1980, protection for the British coal mining industry has been revoked and we have seen how pressure passes from the international coal market through the industry to reach collieries. That pressure will intensify and it is clear that with such pressure in a privatised industry, corners will be cut. It is essential that the Government accept new clause 4 so that the powers under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 can be passed on and that strong legislation and the powerful safety culture can be continued.

As the Minister for Energy is aware, throughout the 1980s the industry went through a second technical revolution. Mining is now a semi-automated process. The number of men employed on a coal face today is much smaller than it was just 10 years ago. Some coal faces of 250 m are run with only five men. There have been enormous achievements in productivity. As the Minister is aware, productivity has increased by 150 per cent. since the miners' strike ended in 1985. That increase in productivity has occurred because of the application of a skilled work force and high technology. At the same time, the number of serious injuries and fatalities has fallen. That is a great tribute to the men and to management.

8.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) stressed that British Coal has a better safety record than its competitors in Australia, America and south America. He drew our attention to the safety record of private mines in this country. People do not often compare the safety record of private mines with that of British Coal. There are 160 private mines in the country and the record of fatalities and serious injuries in private mines is greater than it is in the publicly owned industry.

There are 1,800 people employed in the private deep mining sector and there were two fatalities last year. That is one fatality per 900 workers. For British Coal, the equivalent figure is one per 5,000 workers. Would privatisation result in a diminution in safety standards and thus lead to a large decrease in safety in the public sector? That aspect is worrying the miners unions, particularly when they consider the mining companies which operate in America, Australia and South Africa.

We urge the Minister to look carefully at the present position in British Coal and particularly the role of the deputies. The deputy's safety role is paramount. He is a supervisor who is responsible for production, but he is also responsible for safety. Together with the workmen's inspectors as provided under section 123 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the deputies have managed to achieve a reduction in the number of accidents and likely incidents.

The Minister should ensure that the role of the deputy continues irrespective of the structure of the privatised industry. The deputy's role is essential for safety. Section 123 inspectors should also be retained, perhaps with improved powers. Under a privatised industry in future, a section 123 inspector should have the right to stop a job if he determines that there are unsafe practices or that a machine is defective. He should be able to do that without any fear of retribution as a result of those decisions.

The Minister for Energy should consider those suggestions seriously and ensure that, whatever form the privatised industry takes, we have deputies and section 123 inspectors, perhaps with improved powers. In that way, we can ensure that the strong safety culture continues.

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) said that it was not possible to say enough about safety. I understand that, but I shall try to pick up as many points that have been made by hon. Members as possible. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) asked me to agree to see a delegation on

*[Mr. Eggar]*

safety matters. Yes, of course: if he wishes to come to talk to me with some of his colleagues, I shall be delighted to see him.

I do not think that there is any disagreement that, whatever system of privatisation is implemented, it is absolutely critical that the safety regime in the coal and rail industries will exist with a view, at the very least, to maintaining what are already by common consent impressive safety standards, and improving them. That objective underlines the Government's approach to safety in the rail and coal industries as we make our decisions on privatisation.

We have to continue with uniformly—I stress the word "uniformly"—rigorous safety standards. I agree with the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) that we cannot have possible—I stress the word "possible"—fragmentation of the coal industry, leading to a loss of safety knowledge or an impairment of safety information transmission systems. That is why I took particular note of the HSC's proposal that there might be some industry-wide safety arrangements and a safety committee.

Several hon. Members asked questions about safety in the rail industry. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) referred mainly to that matter. We will, of course, set out our safety proposals in the White Paper, but the key principles will be, first, that the HSE will have responsibility for setting out and monitoring standards, as at present—it will have the same role. Secondly, the franchised railway passenger companies will individually be responsible for safe operation. Thirdly, the track authority which will be responsible for track and signalling will have overall responsibility for the day-to-day safe running of the railway. I hope that that deals with the questions of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and other hon. Members, but I fear that it might not.

**Mr. Adley:** Is my hon. Friend saying that the track authority will be British Rail and that British Rail will be responsible for ensuring all safety on all railways?

**Mr. Eggar:** The record will show that the track authority will have overall responsibility for the day-to-day safe running on the railway. Of course, even if my hon. Friend's supposition is right as to who that track authority will be, he will have to wait and find confirmation in the White Paper.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised the circular question of fencing and who will pay for it. That is clearly a matter for the main Bill, and I shall draw it to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport. The British Transport police and to whom they report are also being considered at the moment. I expect more detail about that in the White Paper. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Dalyell:** I am a little puzzled, as that matter was raised in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). There are crucial decisions that could fairly easily be made in favour of making the British Transport police responsible to a Government Department. If there is no decision, is it not a little alarming to think that the transport police will report to private organisations? What other explanation do we deduce from the Minister's hesitation?

**Mr. Eggar:** I am always keen to try to help the hon. Gentleman. I can say no more than that the answer will be made clear in the White Paper, which is due for publication, I understand, in the fairly near future. Of course, the hon. Gentleman will be able to comment on that point.

Most of the debate has concentrated on safety in the coal mining industry. I was fascinated by what the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) had to say, with his 1935 leaflet. Nobody is disputing for a moment the catastrophic safety record that existed before nationalisation in many—not all—private mines. Everyone who has any knowledge of economic history recognises the considerable sacrifices that were made by many miners and their families.

The supposition on which the right hon. Gentleman based his thesis was that somehow, because ownership of the mines will be returned to the private sector, we will be re-creating the pre-nationalisation safety record. That is not borne out by the record of the private mining industry, for example. It has considerably improved its record. One can always discuss safety statistics, but its record is more or less comparable with that of British Coal. As everybody knows, British Coal's record is among the best in the world.

The other thesis that the right hon. Gentleman advanced is that there had been a deterioration in safety since the Scargill strike. He put that down to a lack of relationship between the union and management. His hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood gave the right hon. Gentleman part of the answer. There was and has been clear improvement in Nottinghamshire over the past three years because of a major effort by management and the work force. According to the statistics, since the Scargill strike there has been a steady decline in the rate per 100,000 man shifts of all reported injuries. That is a very sharp and welcome decline. The right hon. Gentleman's basic thesis seems to be severely flawed.

The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) referred to the employment of disabled people. I can assure him publicly that I shall respond to his points in writing. If he will forgive me, I will not take the time of the House on that matter now.

The hon. Member for Midlothian raised, as he has done on previous occasions, his concerns about roof bolting and its safety implications. I do not know whether I have done so before, and if so I apologise, but I invite the hon. Gentleman to visit Rufford colliery which I have visited and which is pioneering roof bolting. That colliery is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sherwood. The hon. Member for Midlothian should talk to the men and the NACODS deputy there about what they think about the method of roof bolting that is being introduced in that mine.

I accept that the simple transfer of American roof bolting practices into United Kingdom geological conditions would give rise to considerable concern and would not be approved by the HSC. They are different geologically, and the stresses, particularly where there are overhead workings, are different. I recommend that the hon. Gentleman make that visit if he has time during the recess, because it opened my eyes and was interesting.

He also asked about self-rescuers. Licensed mines will be subject to the requirements of the personal protective equipment regulations and, where appropriate, they will be required to provide whatever protective equipment is

demanded by the assessment that must be carried out, so there will not be a differential system. The level of risk safety assessment will be important in determining the position of self-rescuers.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) also asked about rescue facilities. I assure him that we are carefully considering the appropriate way forward.

9 pm

Most hon. Members who spoke raised the question of new changes to the mines health and safety law and particularly its consequences for deputies. As the House knows, those mattes are for the HSC and the HSE. The HSE has carried out extensive consultations and is now on its 10th draft. That consultation process started well before the privatisation issue arose. I assure the House that the new regulations, which are the responsibility of the HSC and HSE, will not mean a change from a statutory to a voluntary basis for the safety inspection and supervision duties currently carried out by deputies. The HSC has always intended that the new proposals will be statutory, so we shall have a chance to consider those.

**Mr. Benn:** One issue with which the Minister has not dealt, to which I and one of my hon. Friends referred, is the penalty of threat of dismissal to British Rail employees now, or possibly to employees in the privatised mines, if they report safety defects which they believe might endanger fellow workers or the public. Will the Minister give an absolute assurance that nobody will be punished for bringing into the public domain defects that may affect the health and safety of others?

**Mr. Eggar:** I would take a dim view of measures taken by management to impair the employment prospects of someone who genuinely—I stress genuinely—expresses concern about safety matters.

A number of hon. Members have spoken about the dedication of the unions and management to high safety standards within coal mines. I have no quarrel with that. I have forgotten which hon. Member stressed that, whatever else happened, the NUM would not go out of its way to defend a member acting in breach of safety regulations. That is an important statement, and I am aware of the commitment within the mining industry to high safety standards. I am not aware of a case like that described by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, and I shall look into the matter.

**Mr. Redmond:** This is an important point. The Minister is obviously not aware that British Rail suppressed a report. Had those involved brought it to the public's attention, they would doubtless have been transferred down the line. My right hon. Friend made a valid point about the safety of other people. It is vital that, if employees report defects to management, and management do nothing and allow the deterioration or lack of safety to continue, those employees should be protected against disciplinary action if they bring the defect to the public's notice. That must be right for safety.

**Mr. Eggar:** I have much sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. As he guesses, I am not aware of the circumstance that he cites, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport was listening to the exchange, and he will look into that matter.

I agree that, if someone reports his safety concerns through the proper channels, it would be quite wrong for disciplinary action to be taken against him. I am not aware of such cases in the mining industry, but if there have been some I would like to look into them and then decide what to say about them.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** We are talking not just about development but about the approval of plant and machinery and of processes and materials. Machines that go underground have to be approved as safe. I do not want to go into detail now, but this is as important a matter as the others that we have been discussing, and we want assurances on it—without them, there could be disasters.

**Mr. Eggar:** I have noted the hon. Gentleman's point and I will ensure that it is covered. I cannot give him an instant explanation of how we will deal with it; it is one of a number of issues that we will be examining, and I hope that, when the main Bill is published, I will be able to satisfy him in the subsequent debates.

**Mr. Snape:** The Minister began by saying that it is not possible to say enough about safety. He has just proved that it is possible to spend 15 minutes without saying a great deal about it. His response was less than satisfactory, especially on the future role of the deputies and the safety inspectorate in the mines. He seemed to use the "leave it to the Health and Safety Executive" technique.

We all admire the work of the HSE, but given the responsibilities being thrust on it for both industries, we need some reassurance that its budget will be considerably increased and that the shortage of personnel qualified to carry out some of these tasks will be dealt with sooner rather than later.

As some of my hon. Friends have said, it has been pressure applied to management by those who work in the industry and their representatives that has brought about changes in the legislation governing safety in both industries. I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) talk about new clause 4. Once or twice over the years, I have heard him discuss the old clause 4, if memory serves. Be that as it may, he made the right point about deaths in mining. What he said applies equally to deaths in the railway industry.

In the days of steam locomotives and single wagon loads, the rate of attrition among railway workers amounted to two or three people a day. Their deaths did not make the same tragic impact as some of the mine disasters, but both industries proved highly dangerous to those who worked in them. It was largely due to the efforts of those who worked in them and of their trade union representatives that the safety record of both industries improved so much.

We know from the history books that improvements such as continuous brakes on trains, proper signalling systems, the abolition of gas lighting in railway rolling stock and better hours of work came about because of pressure by workers. Those improvements cost a great deal and were consequently opposed by the private sector managers of the day, many of whom, bewhiskered and top-hatted, sat on the Conservative Benches, as some of them still do—*[Interruption.]*

Conservative Members groan, but I must remind them that it was only the railway directors and mine owners of 100 years ago who proved resistant to safety measures. I invite them to cast their minds back five years to the Zeebrugge disaster and to memos signed by the

*[Mr. Snape]*

management of Townsend Thoresen about the need for proper systems to alert the captain that bow doors had been properly closed. We all remember some of the sarcastic comments made by the managers in the margins of those reports. They were: "Nice, what would they like next? How much namby-pamby effort do we need?"

The authorship of the comments was denied in the wake of the Zeebrugge disaster, but they show that private sector transport management has always been concerned about the impact of safety measures on budgets. On many occasions private sector management has resisted improvements.

**Mr. Benn:** My hon. Friend gives some historical examples. Samuel Plimsoll, whose safety line saved many lives in the coffin ships, was denounced in the shipping gazettes as a terrorist because of his work for the safety of seamen.

**Mr. Snape:** My right hon. Friend graphically illustrates the fact that those who cross management for any reason are all too often labelled terrorists or, to bring the parlance up to date, as militants by management who always resist improvements.

It is not just the private sector which is at fault, nor is it always in the past that safety improvements have been resisted. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) spoke about a railway employee who wrote a critical report about sectorisation on British Rail and the causes of the Newton train accident. The report was written not by an ordinary rank-and-file railwayman, but by Peter Rayner, who was the regional operating manager of the former London Midland region. Because of his trenchant criticisms of sectorisation and its impact on railway safety, he was, if I may use the railway term, shunted into a non-job and then shunted out of the industry.

That safety manager blew the whistle on unsafe practices caused, in his opinion, by sectorisation. Such problems will be much worse when private operators are franchised to run parts of the railway system in the way that the Government envisage. On this, as on so many other issues, the Minister's reply was inadequate, because he does not know. The Government argue, "Leave it to us. Just vote the necessary expenditure and leave the rest to us. We will publish a White Paper."

As I said in Committee, if the mayor and leading councillors in the borough of Sandwell turned up at the Department of the Environment and asked to be allowed to spend millions of pounds on a scheme that they were not prepared to define or tell the Secretary of State about, the men in white coats would rush them away before they could make a presentation. That is what the Bill is about.

**Mr. Eggar:** You said that in Committee.

**Mr. Snape:** I make no apology for repeating it. I may have made the point better in Committee, but the Minister's response this time was no better. If he does not take the grin off his face, I shall repeat the anecdote on Third Reading and see what sort of response we get then. The Minister's replies on safety were inadequate, and I invite my hon. Friends to support the new clause.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time.

*The House divided:* Ayes 226, Noes 267.

**Division No 43]** **[9.15 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*

Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mrs. Llin Golding.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Ellletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'rtfdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter

| | |
|---|---|
| Townend, John *(Bridlington)* | Whittingdale, John |
| Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)* | Widdecombe, Ann |
| Tracey, Richard | Wiggin, Jerry |
| Trend, Michael | Wilkinson, John |
| Trotter, Neville | Willetts, David |
| Twinn, Dr Ian | Wilshire, David |
| Vaughan, Sir Gerard | Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)* |
| Walden, George | Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)* |
| Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)* | Wolfson, Mark |
| Waller, Gary | Wood, Timothy |
| Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)* | Yeo, Tim |
| Waterson, Nigel | Young, Sir George *(Acton)* |
| Watts, John | |
| Wells, Bowen | **Tellers for the Noes:** |
| Wheeler, Sir John | **Mr. Andrew MacKay and** |
| Whitney, Ray | **Mr. Sydney Chapman.** |

*Question accordingly negatived.*

New clause 5—*Disclosure of negotiations as to transfers*

'.—In the exercise of their powers under section 1 the relevant corporation or the Secretary of State shall disclose to representatives of the workforce and, in the case of British Rail representatives of the passengers, the names and addresses of any person or body with whom they are in contact with a view to transferring to them any fixtures, property, rights or liabilities, within one week of the commencement of that contact.'.—*[Mr. Dobson.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Dobson:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** With this we shall discuss new clause 6—*Coal industry consultation (disclosure)*

**Mr. Dobson:** I shall be brief, as I do not wish to detain the House. The objective of both new clauses is straightforward. We believe that, where any person or body shows an interest in buying all or part of British Coal or taking a franchise for any part of British Rail, the names and addresses of those persons or organisations should be disclosed within one week to representatives of the work forces of British Coal and British Rail and to the representatives of British Rail's passengers, in the interests of the open government that the Prime Minister claims to favour. If the Government believe in open government, there should be no problem about disclosing that information.

There need be no secrecy. Those who work in the coal and rail industries and passengers wishing to travel on the British railway network in the future are entitled to know that is happening. We do not believe that those who work in the industries are chattels, to be discussed and distributed as a result of private conversations between business people, Tory Ministers and civil servants. They are not artefacts to be bought and sold, or even to be preserved in a museum. They are human beings. Their jobs are at stake in the privatisation process and they are entitled to know who is trying to become their boss or bosses.

I hope that the Minister will say either that he agrees with the new clauses or, if he does not agree with the detail, that he finds the principle acceptable and that the Government will change the Bill in another place. I need say no more on the matter. I hope that the Minister will be equally brief in his reply.

9.30 pm

**Mr. Cryer:** My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and I are deeply concerned about one aspect of disclosure covered by new clause 5. I refer to the electrification of the Leeds-Bradford railway, and to the leasing of the rolling stock. The Industrial Bank of Scotland has clearly stated that in the absence of specific legislation and of a Government guarantee that after privatisation, the leasing payments will continue to be made—by the Government, if necessary—it is not prepared to pursue negotiations with West Yorkshire passenger transport authority. The scheme is therefore lurching from crisis to crisis.

The Minister visited Leeds this morning to take part in one of a series of negotiations. The PTA, the manufacturers of the rolling stock in Leeds—Hunslet, and the passengers affected are greatly concerned.

The Bill has thrown a spanner in the works in respect of the provision of rolling stock on that section of the line it is proposed to electrify. A new clause that requires information about organisations engaged in the transfer of assets under clause 1 would be welcome. It would potentially ensure greater knowledge and certainty for organisations that are helping the PTA by leasing rolling stock.

As the Minister knows, the Government insisted on the PTA leasing the stock. The Minister shakes his head, but I well recall that that option was the one which the Minister said the PTA should take. I believe that he is sympathetic to the electrification scheme and wants it to go ahead. At a meeting in Bradford last Friday attended by representatives of the chamber of commerce, Members of Parliament and councillors from both major parties, all expressed enthusiasm for the scheme and urged the PTA to go ahead with the leasing arrangements.

The problem is that the organisations with which it needs to reach agreements, such as the Industrial Bank of Scotland, say that privatisation places the leasing of the rolling stock in jeopardy. The PTA is looking at concluding an arrangement with other institutions for leasing the rolling stock that would not depend on a Government guarantee in the event that privatisation unfortunately went ahead. The PTA itself might be in jeopardy.

When the Minister was in Manchester on Thursday morning, he said that PTAs and passenger transport executives would in no way be affected by privatisation. I hope that he will repeat that assurance when he winds up. New clause 5 represents a small step towards providing information to bodies—not those under Labour control—such as the Industrial Bank of Scotland. It is a private enterprise bank, but says that privatisation is in effect placing a question mark over the future of the body or bodies that are currently entering negotiations concerning the provision of rolling stock.

As the Minister knows, it is vital for Bradford that the electrification scheme goes ahead, InterCity services are wholly dependent on that happening. As was made clear at Friday's meeting in Bradford city hall, if electrification does not take place British Rail will have to consider whether current method of taking the sparse inter-city service from Leeds to Bradford remains a viable option.

Electrification of local lines would provide decent passenger services and a decent capacity, neither of which exists at present on the rush-hour services between Leeds and Bradford and up the Aire Valley. It would also give British Rail the opportunity to expand the London-Bradford InterCity service. Surely the Minister wants the service to be expanded and improved, so that people will be encouraged to travel by rail rather than by road.

Bradford is a fine city; it is the queen of Yorkshire cities. Surely it deserves, and needs, an electrified railway network as part of the inter-city service. At present, a diesel locomotive has to drag the whole electric train, including the power unit, the trailer car and the coaches, en bloc to Bradford, and then propel them back.

If new clause 5 were passed, a bit of background information could be provided to give financial institutions more certainty. It does not go far enough, but at least it would be a step in the right direction. I hope that the Minister will give me the assurances that I require, and that, if he does not consider the new clause satisfactory, a provision with similar wording can be tabled in the Lords.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): I wish to endorse everything said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), and to stress the importance to Bradford's economic future of the speedy implementation of the West Yorkshire electrification scheme.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I believe that the hon. Gentleman had an exchange with one of my deputies earlier. I hope that he will relate his speech directly to the new clause.

**Mr. Madden:** Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South, I hope that the Minister will tell us that he can present a measure in the House of Lords to allay the anxiety of financial institutions about the effects of privatisation on British Rail and the future of passenger transport authorities, especially in West Yorkshire.

We have heard some powerful speeches, expressing the anxieties about privatisation felt by many British Rail and coal mining workers. I hope that the Minister will tell us that a formula has been found to enable the contract leasing arrangements to go ahead; so that the West Yorkshire PTA can purchase new rolling stock and this important scheme can proceed on schedule with the maximum urgency, bringing to West Yorkshire the benefits that are an integral part of the scheme.

**Mr. Freeman:** The hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) gave us as an example the disclosure of the identity of a possible transferee on the West Yorkshire lines. Clearly, that is highly appropriate: the new clause would require British Rail to disclose the identity of parties consulted by British Rail, the Department of Transport or—in relation to British Coal—the Department of Trade and Industry.

I shall deal first with the argument of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and then with the points raised in the context of new clause 5 by the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The Government do not believe that either of the new clauses is appropriate. Therefore I do not commend them to the House. However, I agree with the thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras: it would confuse employees and users of British Rail if there were to be constant identification of the names and addresses of all parties with whom there had been conversations, for the obvious reason that a number of the applications will not proceed.

I have had conversations with about three dozen potential railway franchisees and freight operators. I have not disclosed their identity. Some have done so, but that must be a matter for them. It would not be in the interests of the 136,000 British Rail employees or of British Rail passengers if there were speculation at this stage about who may or may not be interested.

**Mr. Dobson:** One of the objects of the exercise is to end speculation. There would be no speculation if the new clause were accepted. All that the Government would need to do is publish a list once a week of the names of those with whom they had had conversations. There will be speculation if the Government do not publish a list. People will start to wonder who the Government are talking to and who they intend should be the bosses. They will speculate about the record of these outfits, if they are so ashamed of their contacts with the Government that they will not disclose their record, and if the Government are so ashamed of these outfits that they, too, will not disclose their record.

**Mr. Freeman:** That does not correspond with the real world. If we, or British Coal or British Rail were under an obligation to publish those names, we should find that some parties who are genuinely interested in operating railway services would be reluctant to come forward.

**Mr. Dobson:** Why?

**Mr. Freeman:** Because that is the commercial reality of life. Some parties will want to hold conversations in confidence. If there were a potential management buy-out, as happened in the case of the bus industry, does the hon. Gentleman believe that the management and staff of British Rail, interested in principle in running the franchise on one of British Rail's lines, would like their identity, without necessarily their approval or knowledge, to be published? I do not believe that that would be in either their interests or British Rail's interests.

There will be ample oportunity for those who respond to the competitive process for letting a rail franchise to respond to the tender documents and for the identity of the chosen tenderer, in negotiating the detailed contract both with British Rail as the track authority and with the franchising authority that is to provide any subsidy, then to be fully disclosed. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has told me that he has provided to the House of Commons Library a list of all the parties to whom he has written and of all those who have responded on the future of British Coal. He has also told me that those who wish to do so can identify themselves and publish their advice.

In the context of new clause 5, may I deal with the points raised by the hon. Members for Bradford, South and for Bradford, West? The Government very much want the electrification project to proceed. I do not believe that the issue is the privatisation of British Rail. The problem relates to the potential privatisation of the passenger transport authorities and the passenger transport executives. They are two separate issues. I am happy to repeat the assurance that I gave in Manchester: that the Government have no intention of changing the status of the PTAs or the PTEs, or the method of their funding. That should go some way towards allaying the fears of the banks involved in writing a particular lease.

**Mr. Madden:** It is clear from the earlier debates that legislation protecting pension funds is vital. Equally, when the privatisation Bill is introduced, will it be possible to ring-fence PTAs and PTEs from privatisation? That would allay the anxieties of financial institutions, which have

*[Mr. Madden]*

been increased in recent weeks and months and which led the Minister to have five meetings with the PTA to discuss these thorny issues.

**Mr. Freeman:** I shall certainly give that some consideration, but the White Paper will make the position crystal clear. The hon. Gentleman asked for inclusion of such a guarantee in legislation. I am not convinced that that is warranted or appropriate, but I shall bear in mind what he said, because the Government's intentions are clear.

How do we move forward in the context of new clause 5 to ensure that the project proceeds? At my meeting today, I said that there was no potential transferee for the operations of West Yorkshire railways services. To my mind, the fears of the banking system were misplaced, because we had no intention of changing the proposed arrangements.

9.45 pm

I have undertaken to write to the PTA tomorrow morning. I have said that I am perfectly prepared to talk to bankers to try to allay their fears. I hope that a lease can be written. It is the first time for 70 years that a true operating lease will have been written for the railway industry. Therefore, we are breaking new ground.

I do not believe that the acceptance of new clause 5 would help the case of West Yorkshire electrification. I am confident that that project will proceed and that the lease will be written. It has taken longer than I or those in West Yorkshire would have liked, but there is no doubt in my mind about the outcome.

I hope, with those few brief remarks, that the House will accept my assurances and explanations, and that new clauses 5 and 6 will not be pressed.

**Mr. Dobson:** We have had a bit of a novelty tonight. We all know about the love that dare not speak its name, but now we have the bids that dare not speak their names. Despite the fact that the Minister has not made any commitments, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Clause 1

### POWER TO ACT IN RELATION TO PROPOSALS FOR TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS, PROPERTY ETC.

**Mr. Adley:** I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 1, line 14, at end insert—

'(1A) It shall be the duty of the British Railways Board to communicate its intention to the Secretary of State who, within four weeks, shall present a report of such proposals to Parliament.'.

I move the amendment in the hope that you, Madam Speaker, will accept that it has been difficult throughout the Committee stage of the Bill to know precisely what we were talking about because we had little information. My amendment is related to the provision of information which, I maintain, should have been provided previously by the Government so that we could debate with a little more clarity than has been possible in Committee and even up to Report.

The heading to clause 1 says:

"Power to act in relation to proposals for transfer of functions, properties etc."

There are no such proposals. We therefore need more information from the Government and I hope to be able either to extract that information this evening or to obtain from my hon. Friend the Minister guarantees which satisfy me and my hon. Friends that it will be forthcoming shortly.

The House is being asked to pass the Bill with insufficient information. I somewhat philosophically ask my hon. Friend the Minister and the House why there is no White Paper. This is the 14th year of Conservative government. We have had some root-and-branch enthusiasts for railway privatisation—my Lords Parkinson, Moore and Ridley, to name but three—none of whom managed to arrange a meeting place between their political ambitions on the one hand and common sense on the other when it came to producing a White Paper on the possible change of ownership in some parts of British Rail.

Has secrecy precluded the appearance of the White Paper? It cannot be secrecy because we believe in open Government. Is it arrogance? Of course it is not, because the Prime Minister——

**Mr. Dobson:** She is in the House of Lords, too.

**Mr. Adley:** I shall resist that temptation, having had one go this afternoon. Once a day is enough, as the actress said to the bishop.

Is it secrecy? No, because we have an open Government who want to provide us with as much information as possible. Is it incompetence? I do not think so. Is it deliberate? I do not know about that. I believe that the answer is much simpler. It is because it is proving so difficult for the Government to produce a sensible White Paper which somehow marries the ambition of one or two of my colleagues with the Government's need and intention to maintain a national rail system. That is the reason why we have not yet had a White Paper.

I put the question simply to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport. Can he assure me that we shall have a White Paper before the Bill receives Royal Assent? To put it even more bluntly, can he assure me that the House will have the White Paper before we rise for the summer recess? In the absence of such a White Paper, I must make certain assumptions to explain why I wish the Government to show a little more determination to produce it before the Bill proceeds much further.

I begin by quoting an interesting leader in *The Independent* a few weeks ago:

"Having wrestled long and not very impressively with the question of how to privatise British Rail, the Government has come up with a minimalist solution. It will allow contenders to compete for franchises to run passenger services, with the possibility of BR's freight and parcels businesses being sold. John MacGregor, the Transport Secretary, said yesterday that BR will be the track authority. A regulatory body will be empowered to decide who should be granted the franchises and to act as referee.

This cautious approach has much to commend it."

Is that correct? Was the writer of that leading article accurately summarising the Government's intentions? If so, are the Government dragging the railway back from what I regard as the abyss or the jungle of total deregulation into which it looked as though it might fall two or three years ago?

One of the hardest tasks that my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have yet to undertake is to realise that the course on which they are embarked will sadly dash the great expectations of

some of my colleagues who dream of waking up one morning to find that the Great Western Railway has been reincarnated. The Government would therefore be doing themselves a favour if they made the position fairly clear fairly soon.

**Mr. Geoffrey Dickens** (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my hon. Friend concede that it would be sheer common sense for the Government to provide more information so that hon. Members could scrutinise the Government's plans? For example, the Select Committee on Energy thoroughly examined the privatisation of electricity and decided that the costs of nuclear decommissioning could not be met. The City and its institutions formed the same opionion and in the end, at least a section of what was to be privatised was not privatised. One must not underestimate the value of the House in scrutinising the work of the Departments. It would be advantageous if information was given to the House before the legislation proceeds much further.

**Mr. Adley:** My hon. Friend makes a point which is not only interesting but pertinent. If the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) had been in his place, he would have agreed as vigorously as I do. I have not had the opportunity to consider carefully what my hon. Friend says, but he must be right.

As I recall, Lord Parkinson was Secretary of State for Transport at the time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said, he thought that it would be a mere bagatelle to privatise the nuclear industry. Sadly, the facts eventually proved him wrong. My hon. Friend is right. More information at an earlier date and an opportunity to debate the Government's propositions at an early date could have prevented the embarrassing retraction which had to take place on that occasion.

Will the White Paper deal with the taxation options? Can my hon. Friend the Minister tell me whether I am right in pushing the point? The Germans, for example, have a transport policy which seeks to transfer traffic from road to rail. They do not have complicated debates about ownership, and privatisation of the railways would be regarded as a faintly silly proposition if it were put to the Bundestag. The Germans simply have taxation arrangements which discourage the use of roads for longer-distance freight and encourage the use of rail. Many of us would like to encourage that here.

Where are we going with the paving Bill? How much longer are we to pretend that the future of British Coal bears any relationship to the future for British Rail? The Bill is an illogical and unreal piece of legislation in many ways. There is no reference, in the Queen's Speech or in any debates in Committee, to the complete privatisation of British Rail.

On 18 May—I welcome this totally—my hon. Friend the Minister, in answer to a question of mine, said:

"I am sure that this will prove useful in the detailed implementation of our policies for restructuring British Rail." —[*Official Report*, 18 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. *34*.]

That is what the Japanese have done. They have restructured their railways and that may be what we are doing. I suggest to my hon. Friend that, if we knew what was in his and the Government's minds, it would save some people getting themselves embarrassingly stuck on the end of a limb from which they will have uncomfortably to withdraw themselves.

Can my hon. Friend tell us what will be the position on financial support for the railways? Is it to continue indefinitely? What will be the relationship between the recipient of financial support and the providers of franchise-holding services? The word "franchise" is the new in-word emanating from Marsham street. Many colleagues in the House know that for some years I have been involved with a major hotel group which is one of the world's leading franchising operations. I suspect that what the Department of Transport means when it talks about franchise and what some of my colleagues in the House mean when they talk of franchising bear little relationship to what will be in the White Paper. The Government have done the House less than a service in producing a paving Bill on the railways before we have had a White Paper.

What is to be? We have had a useful exchange. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy was helpful a few moments ago when I thought that he confirmed—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will tell us whether what my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy said was correct—that on safety, British Rail will be the track authority and will be responsible for ensuring safety levels whoever operates trains on our railways. That will be a substantial step forward.

We should have liked to see—perhaps we shall—in the White Paper references to, for example, infrastructure costs as between road and rail. Of all the amazing allegations, in *The Guardian* this morning it is reported that the National Express company is to complain to the Office of Fair Trading about InterCity's 225 service between London and Edinburgh offering prices that are too competitive. We are coming to something when a private sector coach operator, which gets all its track costs provided free of charge by the taxpayer, complains to the Office of Fair Trading about the ability of our nationalised railway service to compete effectively despite the fact that it has to bear all its own track costs.

Track costs are not the only issue. Will the White Paper include details of the true expenditure as between road and rail in relation to the national health service? Some 5,000 people per year are killed and 250,000 are maimed in road accidents. What is the real cost to the national health service? What is the cost to the Department of Social Security of tens of thousands of people being off work because of accidents on the road?

What about the police? British Rail has to provide for its police from its budget. Like everyone else who uses the road, National Express finds that the taxpayer funds the police in that respect. What about the cost of time in our courts? Untold millions of pounds are spent in our courts every year dealing with traffic accidents and traffic offences. What about BR's task of maintaining the heritage?

What about pollution and congestion? Will the White Paper tackle the real questions which should be asked? We need only leave the House this evening to discover a London choking with fumes from the internal combustion engine. One need only blow one's nose to see what the internal combustion engine is doing to the air of this city and of other major cities in this country.

The White Paper should address those issues. I hope that it will do that, but I am afraid that I have some doubt——

*It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.*

*Ordered,*

*[Mr. Adley]*

**That, at this day's sitting, the British Coal and British Rail (Transfer Proposals) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.**—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

*Not amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.*

**Mr. Adley:** There was a story in the newspapers this morning that BR will shortly announce a loss of £150 million. What will we find in the White Paper about that? I attended the annual general meeting of Lloyd's on Wednesday morning, as I am a member of Lloyd's, and I did some quick mathematics. Lloyd's lost £2 billion in the 1989 trading year. British Rail has allegedly lost £150 million in the trading year 1991. That is a loss of £2 billion for 40,000 people in one year at Lloyd's and a loss of £150 million for 50 million people in one year in the depth of a recession on the railways. On the whole, the taxpayers and travellers of this country do not get a bad deal from BR.

What is to be the role of the railway? Will the White Paper attend seriously to that primary question? What is the role of the railway in a modern industrial state? Ownership is an interesting proposition, but whether or not someone can tack a few carriages on here or there is a matter of cosmetic interest.

As usual, there are double standards. British Rail was required by the Government to produce plans for a channel tunnel rail link. The Government said, "Build it as cheaply as you can and make sure that it meets Treasury guidelines." British Rail spent 18 months looking into the matter and buying houses. Then someone else came along and told BR to change the route. In the meantime, the Winchester bypass has been proceeding. I strongly support that, and the taxpayer bears all the environmental costs, but BR is expected to meet Treasury guidelines and to produce a railway which is economically acceptable to the Treasury and environmentally acceptable to everyone.

Those issues should be in the White Paper, but we do not know whether they are. We do not know whether they are relevant to the Bill. As we do not have the White Paper, I have the advantage that I can get away with saying virtually anything in relation to the amendment, because we do not know what is in the White Paper.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I shall be listening to the hon. Gentleman very carefully.

**Mr. Adley:** I will therefore draw my remarks to a close.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport was very good in Committee. He has been conciliatory and helpful. I was one of the first people, if not the first, to make the point that the railways enjoy a unique relationship with their work force, born of the loyalty, enthusiasm and dedication of 150 years of serving the travelling public. I am not speaking as a spokesman of the trade unions—I cannot say that the trade unions have done nothing to cause damage to the travelling public, because they have—but there is a new mood afoot within the railway unions. They should be consulted by the Government as the legislation proceeds. The unions have some interesting suggestions to make and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure me that they will be consulted.

I close as I started, by saying that I do not want to press the amendment to a Division. Nevertheless, I will do so if my hon. Friend the Minister cannot satisfy my request that the White Paper should appear quickly. I hope that he can do that.

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): I shall not detain the House for long, but an important constitutional point arises from the amendment. If the amendment were adopted, it would be one redeeming feature of a bad Bill and a bad way of proceeding—pushing legislation through the House. The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) repeatedly made the valid point that there is no White Paper. Therefore, if the amendment were accepted, there would be some safeguards and a reassurance that the matter would come back to the House before any hard-and-fast decisions were made. There is great anxiety that, if the legislation is passed unamended, the House will be bounced into franchising or privatising the railways, in particular, without being able to take full cognisance of all the ramifications or being able to influence Government opinion before legislation is lined up and pushed through the House.

I deliberately used the words "constitutional point", because I invite hon. Members to pause to consider that we do not have the White Paper, but that their Lordships may do so when the matter reaches them. It is not only manifestly unfair but wrong in principle that this democratically elected Chamber will not be able to consider the White Paper in advance of legislation, whereas the other place might be able to do so.

I am told by hon. Members who have been in the House longer than I that it is possible that the Bill will have Royal Assent before the summer recess. Other hon. Members shake their heads and say no. It concerns me that we are about to embark upon a long summer recess. The passing of this legislation will signal to British Rail a certain way of proceeding in anticipation of privatisation. My anxiety is that we shall come back to the House in the autumn and either complete certain stages of the Bill's progress or find it already on the statute book. Incidentally, we keep talking about one privatisation Bill in the autumn, but I assume that there will be two Bills. It would be nonsense and quite outrageous for there to be only one Bill.

**Mr. Freeman** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Mackinlay:** The Minister nods his head, and I welcome that confirmation; there will be two Bills. My anxiety is that we shall be down the road to privatisation or franchising in a manner which no hon. Member will have been able to influence, and we shall be presented largely with a fait accompli.

If hon. Members consider that remark to be alarmist or without basis, I refer them to the Ports Act 1991, which the same Department that is pushing this legislation through the House produced in the previous Parliament. I studied the Ports Act 1991 this very evening. Very little on the face of the Ports Bill disclosed how the ports privatisation would proceed. It was pushed through both Houses without proper examination.

I am concerned that, in respect of this Bill or Bills that we are yet to see, there will not be proper discussion of the implications of privatisation unless we adopt an amendment such as that which has been moved by the hon. Member for Christchurch. The hon. Gentleman ably explained why it is in hon. Members' interests to have the capacity, apart from on Second Reading and in

Committee, to examine the proposals of British Rail which is charged with facilitating the implementation of the Secretary of State's proposals.

For those reasons, we should support the hon. Member for Christchurch. It is not the fault of the House that there is no White Paper; it is the failure of the Government. They have been dilatory and have let down the House by not producing a White Paper.

The unelected other place may have the benefit of a White Paper. We have a right and a duty to be able to examine the proposals outside the context of the Second Reading of a future Bill. For those reasons, I hope that we shall support the amendment of the hon. Member for Christchurch and that he will not be tempted to withdraw it.

**Mr. Wolfson:** I wish to support the amendment on the basis of my experience and that of all my hon. Friends who represent Kent and south-east London of British Rail's secretive approach to its plans for the development of the channel tunnel rail link in the past three and a half years.

The amendment would go some distance toward ensuring, through the Secretary of State, that information on British Rail's proposals appertaining to the Bill would be in the public arena. My unsatisfactory experience has alerted me to the importance of that happening in the future under the Bill.

Many unanswered questions about the fast rail link are relevant not only to the south-east of England but to the whole country. I am also concerned about how the privatisation proposals will affect Network SouthEast, on which London's prosperity and future will always depend. Although it is right to seek ways of involving the private sector in the operation of British Rail, Network SouthEast, which serves a great capital city, will always need to be the beneficiary of some public subsidy. The House will want to know how that is likely to be organised in a privatisation Bill, so I echo the requests to my hon. Friend the Minister for details of those proposals in a White Paper as rapidly as possible.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on the point about Network SouthEast being relevant not only to the south-east of England but to the whole of the United Kingdom. I understand that the figures that British Rail will publish tomorrow suggest that, although its loss is £150 million overall, the loss on Network SouthEast is £250 million. The hon. Gentleman's point must be taken on board; if Network SouthEast is to be supported—I accept that it must be, because of what it serves—it should not be at the expense of the rest of the United Kingdom. That is one of the reasons why we must have more information on what is proposed for the south-east and the rest of the country.

**Mr. Wolfson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point in support of my argument.

I have no doubt that London is now in danger of being less well served by its rail system than other capital cities with which it is in competition. We are having some difficulty in persuading the European bank to come to London and we may not win that argument. The issues on that are much wider than this debate, but one of the factors that will ensure that London continues to be a highly successful financial centre serving the rest of the world is people's ability to travel to and from work. As I have often done in the past, I compare London with Paris, which has a 19th-century rail network and a metro network equivalent to our tube. But it also has a whole new network of RER railway lines crossing Paris from 30 miles outside to the centre. Trains on that network travel at 60 mph through the centre of the city. London has no equivalent, and plans for one are still a long way off.

Through a sensible approach to privatisation, we can better overcome some of the problems, but it is important that the House has an opportunity to monitor and debate the plans as often as possible as they develop. In that context, I support the amendment.

**Mr. Milligan:** I sympathise with those who have pressed home the need for the House to have greater information. We have waited a long time for this White Paper—it was first promised in December last year.

The delay has been extremely fruitful, however. At the time, the proposal that appeared to be circulating in the Government was to begin by selling off InterCity. That would have been a bad mistake. First, it would not have promoted competition. Whoever had bought the company would not want to open up lines to competition from rivals. Secondly, it would have been horrendously complicated. British Rail calculated that 30,000 separate issues would have to be included in the contract between InterCity and other operators if the scheme was to work.

The plan that now appears to be circulating in the Government, to allow franchising, is a much more practical way to improve rail services, which is what privatisation should be about.

10.15 pm

Experience in Sweden, a country which Opposition Members have long admired, shows that franchising has been extremely successful. A bus company in the south of Sweden known as BK-Train won the franchise for 400 kilometers against competition from Swedish Rail. The result after the first year has been a halving of fares, a 40 per cent. increase in use and 95 per cent. of the trains arriving on time. Some of the modifications that the company has introduced have been copied by Swedish railways elsewhere on the network. Franchising and a limited introduction of competition are a practical way to improve rail services, which is why the delay in the White Paper has been a good development.

I represent a railway constituency in which more than 2,000 people work in the industry, so I make a plea to the Minister not to rush any decision about the future of British Rail Maintenance Ltd., in Eastleigh, which maintains most of the trains in the southern region and employs almost 1,800 of the 2,000 people to whom I have referred. BRML is a successful part of British Rail and a semi-independent company. It repaired most of the motors damaged by the wrong type of snow recently; fortunately those motors got the right sort of maintenance in Eastleigh. The company has been profitable and increasingly efficient and is taking more steps towards efficiency.

BRML has been hampered, however, by not having the right to compete equally with other companies. It does not, for instance, have the right to compete for contracts to maintain trains north of the river. Apparently the British Rail Board has been trying to reduce its ability to compete with private companies on repairing electric

traction motors. It cannot compete effectively with depots in Network SouthEast. The tendency is to give work to those depots first and afterwards to BRML.

Before the Minister makes any decisions on BRML's future, I hope that he will consult its managers and its work force. I am delighted that he has accepted an invitation to come and visit the works and do just that. I hope that he will not rush his decision, because in this matter consideration will lead to a better decision than any attempt to rush one through.

**Mr. Snape:** I congratulate the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on the comprehensive shopping list that he presented to the Minister. If he elicits a better response from him than we have had, we will be worthy of double congratulations. Many of his points, particularly about the White Paper, were pertinent.

The hon. Gentleman asked about taxation policies and transport. Does he really need a White Paper to find out what the Government's transport taxation policies are? They are very simple: spend as much public money as possible—hundreds of millions of pounds—on widening the M25, and, at least in the view of the former Secretary of State, now Lord Parkinson, then abolish the subsidy for Network SouthEast by 1992. That was his original intention, and I do not think that the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) played a prominent role in opposing it. Perhaps he thinks it just as well that Lord Parkinson left the Department of Transport as soon as he did.

A toll road has been proposed for the west midlands, yet we cannot get the go-ahead to spend the comparatively small amounts of money necessary for the Snow Hill railway line. The hon. Member for Christchurch effectively put across points such as these.

We need a White Paper to find out exactly what is in the Government's mind. We suspect that, even now, a White Paper is being drafted at the Treasury and that its purpose will be to save even more public money on the railways. It will not augur well for the hon. Member for Sevenoaks or his constituents, or for the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), whom I congratulate on his speech.

A continuation of the Government's taxation policy for transport is bad for rail users and for those who maintain or operate the system. I hope that the Minister will tell us, if he knows, what is in the White Paper or that he will say as much as possible to satisfy his hon. Friends. We need to know whether the railways' capital requirements and revenue support needs will for once be met, and we should like to hear about negotiations between the Department and the Treasury to bring that happy situation about.

**Mr. Freeman:** Before dealing with the amendment, I shall deal with the important point raised by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay). The hon. Gentleman is not in his place, but I am sure that he will shortly return. He asked whether we have the correct sequence for the introduction of the Paving Bill and the White Paper on the future of British Rail. That issue is highly relevant to the amendment. I think that we have the sequence right, because the Paving Bill gives British Rail and British Coal the power to hire consultants and extra staff to consider, in due course, our proposals for the introduction of private sector capital into both industries. I am sure that the House wants the reasoned opinions and advice of both those corporations, because they will enable hon. Members to reach a conclusion about the main legislation for British Rail which we intend to introduce later this autumn.

British Rail and British Coal have no power to introduce any element of privatisation until the main legislation has been passed by Parliament. There is no prospect of franchising commencing until the main legislation has been passed. We must first give BR and British Coal the power to consider our proposals. They will then advise not only us, but, through the Government, the House.

**Mr. Dobson:** Will the advice to BR and British Coal and their advice in response to Government proposals be made available to hon. Members?

**Mr. Freeman:** I do not speak for British Coal, British Rail or the Opposition. I have assured the House that, as the Minister responsible for British Rail on a day-to-day basis, I will ensure that the House is properly informed of BR's views. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy has heard the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Mackinlay** *rose*——

**Mr. Freeman:** I have only a few minutes, but if the hon. Gentleman finds that I have not covered his questions, I shall give way towards the end of my reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) asked for specific assurances which I am happy to give. He asked for a categorical assurance that the White Paper would be published before Royal Assent to the Paving Bill. I give him that assurance and hope that that will ensure the sequence that we debated at length in Committee so that the work that British Rail will entrust to its advisers, consultants and extra staff, will have the White Paper as a point of reference.

There may be opportunity in Parliament for comment on the White Paper before Royal Assent, although the debate on the Paving Bill is probably not the right legislative peg upon which to hang a detailed debate. The House may need to have fuller consideration of the White Paper, but the timing of a debate and whether there is one is not a matter for me. I hope that my hon. Friend is reassured on that point. I can confirm our intention to publish the White Paper before the House rises for the summer recess.

My hon. Friends the Members for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and for Christchurch raised two key points. The first concerns what kind of railway we want to see in the last decade of the 20th century. We want an expanding railway, and one that has been helped by the Government. In the past two financial years, we have increased by £1,000 million the resources available to British Rail. Thank goodness, we did not have a national transportation plan setting out precisely, and no more, what funds should be available to British Rail. The Government responded quickly and promptly, in the face of the recession, to maintain the investment programme of British Rail and to increase the investment programme of London Transport, particularly the London Underground part.

We want to see more choice and responsibility introduced into British Rail and to turn the clock back beyond 70 years, to when different companies offered different services, because we believe that choice is

essential. We want an efficient industry, and the forces of the private sector, including BRML, may well improve productivity of those parts of British Rail.

The transfer of freight and passengers on to rail is an important subject and one which would have had to be addressed whether or not we were proposing privatisation. I can confirm that, within the Department of Transport, we are giving serious consideration to the steps that would be needed to ensure that, when decisions are taken on hauling freight, they are taken on the basis of a level playing field in terms of charging and the fiscal regime.

I was asked about what is in the White Paper. I put myself firmly in the school of pragmatists within the Tory party and I want to ensure that our proposals are workable. I believe that this White Paper is rather like a Stilton cheese—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that mirth is breaking out on the Opposition Benches, but perhaps Labour Members will bear with me as I finish my speech.

The White Paper will show that we have workable policies for introducing the private sector into British Rail. We are proposing that BR should have responsibility for running the track and the signalling, through what will become a track authority. There will be a regulator responsible for ensuring fair competition and access to the rail network on the basis of charges to the track authority. We want a privatised rail freight system, and we want to franchise as much as possible of the passenger service, as fast as possible. We are very much in the hands of the private sector, but, already, informal conversations have shown that the private sector thinks that that policy will work. By the end of this Parliament, a significant proportion of passenger services will be run under franchises.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks asked me about subsidy. I can confirm that, for both Network SouthEast and the regional railway system, a subsidising regime will continue through the passenger service obligation grant, which will be paid to those who operate railway services whether in the public or the private sector.

**Mr. Adley:** I am sorry to press my hon. Friend on this point. Can he confirm that my understanding of what the Minister said early this afternoon is as I put it to him? That is that British Rail, as my hon. Friend has just said, will be responsible for all the track, all the signalling and the safety of passengers, whoever is running the trains, if anybody else does run them.

**Mr. Freeman:** I am happy to conclude my remarks by discussing safety, which is extremely important. I confirm what my hon. Friend said. The Health and Safety Executive will set safety standards and monitor them. But the track authority will be responsible, on a day-to-day basis, for all safety issues on the track. That makes sense. I believe that the private sector, whether operating freight services or franchised passenger services, would want it, and that the travelling public would want it.

I hope that on the basis of those remarks my hon. Friend will withdraw his amendment.

10.30 pm

**Mr. Adley:** I thank my hon. Friend very much for his generous answers to the points that I made. Obviously there will be a great deal more to be said when the White Paper is published. On the basis of the assurances that my hon. Friend has given me tonight, I am perfectly happy to withdraw the amendment.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** I beg to move amendment No. 2, in line 29, after 'corporate', insert 'or regulatory body.'.

I do not wish to detain the House. Indeed, some of this is a continuation of, or arises out of, a debate that we have just had. However, it would be helpful if Ministers were able to give us a little more information as to how they envisage the privatised coal and rail sectors being regulated. They have not made this at all clear. Indeed, as the debate on rail services has continued, it has become clear that full-blown privatisation is probably not now on the cards at all.

What we are talking about is the majority of services continuing to be run by the state rail undertaking, and some of the services being franchised. One question that arises immediately is whether or not the track authority will be separate from British Rail as an operator, or whether British Rail will serve in a double capacity. If the Minister were to give some information about that, it would help to clarify forward thinking.

One point that was made when I intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) —it is a matter for concern—related to how British Rail will relate to the track authority, to the regulator and to the other companies operating. Clearly, as the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) pointed out, if British Rail were to issue the franchises, it would not be likely to do so on terms good for competition, just as British Gas has not been terribly co-operative in giving other people access to the pipelines.

If the figures that we expect to get from British Rail tomorrow are correct—showing that the railways lost £150 million, but Network SouthEast lost £250 million; in other words, that the rest of the network, grossed up, made a profit—many concerns will arise, and they will have to be addressed.

The first is one that I accept—that people in London and the south-east will clearly be concerned that vital electric services are loss makers, and that they may be put at risk, either because the franchising will result in cherry picking that might increase the loss to British Rail, or because the support or subsidy is inadequate to maintain both service and forward investment. But, clearly, the rest of the United Kingdom will be concerned that the subsidising of Network SouthEast may be at the expense of services elsewhere.

As I represent a north of Scotland constituency I do not have to tell the Minister that we are extremely concerned about the constant publication, in the Scottish papers, of maps that show the future rail network finishing at Edinburgh and Glasgow, with no line serving the north of Scotland. We are unable to get any commitment to the electrification of the east coast main line.

I put a full stop at that point, because Ministers are in the habit of suggesting that the east coast main line has been electrified. At the risk of boring the House, I repeat that it has been electrified to Edinburgh. The east coast main line always used to run to Aberdeen, and those of us who are served by Aberdeen insist that it should continue to do so. The lack of electrification is an extremely worrying development.

*[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]*

Similarly, the poor quality of the investment in the services to the north, in terms of rolling stock and the development of services, gives us considerable concern. We need to know how British Rail and the track authority will operate, and how they will relate to each other. For example, it seems very unlikely that there will be a huge queue of people wanting to take up the franchise to operate a service between Aberdeen and Inverness.

Let me be quite clear: if somebody comes forward and is willing to do it, and believes that he can do it as an attractive proposition and profitably, I will have no objection whatever, just as I had no objection to the Stagecoach experiment from Aberdeen providing seating accommodation on the trains to the south.

What will happen, however, if no organisation is interested in providing the service, and British Rail feels that it is under pressure to cut loss-making services so that it can compete elsewhere in the network? That is an example of problems that are giving cause for concern. The sooner that we can obtain clarification from the Government of the exact role of the regulator in parcelling out services, including subsidised services, and maintaining services, the better will we be reassured.

I was glad that the Minister was able to say that the White Paper will be published before the House rises for the summer recess. The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to know that I think that that is the right sequence of events. I say that because I think that the debate has helped to head off some of the more ideological flights of fantasy and to draw out some real concerns. I hope that those concerns will help to shape future debates on the basis that full-blown privatisation of the rail network—it would seem that the Government have not been able to produce a viable scheme—is not a serious proposition.

The Government say that they intend to have a rail regulator, but they have not explained how their concept will operate. They left us with a complete blank when we considered the regulation of the coal industry. We considered licensing in Committee, and the Minister said that that was something that he might consider. If there is to be licensing, however, there must be a licensing authority, whether it is a Government Department, a Crown agency, a regulator or whatever.

There may be a logical continuation for British Coal as the regulator for the coal industry even if it is not to be the operator of pits. The Minister knows that I am not happy with the idea of British Coal, in the private sector, being the operator of pits and the licensee of private pits. I do not understand how such a concept can square with the aspiration of genuine competition and choice. It means that one operator will have a clear advantage over any competitor.

It is interesting that references have been made to the Health and Safety Executive while discussing the details of safety in both the coal and rail industries. It may be appropriate for the HSE to have a continuing role and for there to be a specific safety responsibility for the regulators and the operators in both the coal industry and the rail network. It is noteworthy that the Minister said earlier that we cannot talk about safety too much or in too much detail.

We must not put responsibility for ensuring safety in too many places. The danger of separating responsibilities is that someone will think that an element of safety is somebody else's responsibility. Surely every operator must have accountability for safety to the HSE and to whoever issues the operating licence. The right to remove or alter the licence could be a factor in determining safe operation.

If franchising is to be the direction of access to private operators to the rail network, who will set the terms of the franchises? Will they be set by the track authority or an independent body? It is clear that they cannot be set by British Rail if BR is itself an operator, albeit the major operator.

If British Rail is to continue as an operating body, to whom is it likely to be accountable in future? At present, BR is accountable to the Secretary of State for Transport, and through him or her to the House. If BR is to continue as a public sector body, will that relationship continue, or will BR be accountable through the regulator or the traffic authority? What will be its accountability? The Minister must understand that the relationship is being changed even though the details are not apparent. Some clarification would be appropriate.

This is the Government's sixth major privatisation. They have all been different. I do not complain about that —they have properly been different, in the sense that different industries require different approaches. It is sad, however, that we have not always learnt the lessons of the preceding privatisation, and that every new regulator had to embark on a new learning curve. The embarrassment suffered over the past two weeks by OFFER, the electricity regulator, because of the scale of the profits made by that industry, has been apparent. The concentration of ownership in the generating sector needs to be further addressed.

I accept that one cannot apply the techniques used in the privatisation of gas or electricity to those of British Coal and British Rail. However, after 13 years, the Government should have some coherent idea of whether there will be a regulator, and the broad nature of his relationship with the overall track and licensing authorities, and with those operating in the industry.

The Government said that there will be a regulator for rail, but they have not explained how that regulator will operate or relate. They have not even said whether there will be a regulator for coal. It is high time they did. Given that we may not get a coal White Paper before the summer recess, regulation is essential. Although competition may help to provide some discipline, which is clearly a Government objective, it will not wholly meet the bill. There will clearly be a need to ensure that the industry is properly accountable.

**Mr. Eggar:** I hope that I can go some way to helping the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). A number of his detailed questions will be answered in the rail White Paper, which will be published before the House rises for the summer recess. It will include a proposal to establish a rail regulator, which will be separate from British Rail and therefore—as other regulators—ultimately responsible to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The regulatory and franchising functions to which the hon. Gentleman referred will be separated from British Rail—but for more details, the hon. Gentleman will have to await the best-selling White Paper.

As to a regulator for coal, the hon. Gentleman is well aware that the situation there is very different. It is not a

question of a classic regulatory arrangement whereby an outside individual or agency is charged with examining rates of return, prices, and so on. The sense in which the hon. Gentleman uses the word "regulator" relates to his concept of a licensing authority, which he would probably expect to examine such questions as the allocation of deep coal-bearing land, or land otherwise of interest to independent operators.

I do not want to discuss current thinking because the consultation period finished only a week ago. We received a number of detailed responses, particularly on some of the issues that the hon. Gentleman raised. It would not be appropriate to make up our minds in advance of considering those consultation papers—not all of which I have yet been able to read.

The hon. Gentleman made the good point that it is important for the operator of coal mining activities to have a separate function from that of the licensing authority. It is clear that the roles need to be separated, although I am not sure exactly how that is to be done.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** In the event of a competitive bid for a licence, whether it is for a single pit or for a group of pits—I understand that in Scotland, for instance, there may well be an NUM bid, private sector bids and a bid from a miners' consortium—who will make the ultimate decision? Will it be the Secretary of State, or will the decision-making be delegated?

10.45 pm

**Mr. Eggar:** That, I think, is a separate issue. I have no doubt that, if it were decided that the assets of mines were to be sold on a regional basis in the form of a trade sale —which is presumably what the hon. Gentleman is postulating—responsibility would ultimately lie with the Secretary of State. If assets subsequently remained to be disposed of, there might well be a need for another entity to take charge, at arm's length from the Secretary of State. We have not made any decisions; we are evaluating the consultation responses. Such questions, however, must clearly be answered, and they will be answered before the final Bill is presented.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) made several valid points about profitability and the involvements on offer. Did not capital investment in the electricity supply industry give very reasonable returns, and would not investment in the coal and rail industries also give reasonable returns?

**Mr. Eggar:** I agree that the hon. Gentleman's point about the profitability of electricity companies should not go unanswered, but I am not sure that this is the forum in which to answer it.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** I had no intention of pressing this matter, although I thought it important for us to debate it. The Minister has responded constructively. In a way, the debate is premature; on the other hand, it is better for us to have a debate before the Government have formulated all their ideas.

I am grateful to the Minister on two counts. First, he made it clear that he recognised that the establishment of some form of licensing authority was the way forward for the coal industry. It is encouraging to learn that that is the Government's view; it has a certain logic, and such an arrangement could be operated flexibly.

I am still concerned about the lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities in the rail sector. As the Minister says, however, we shall have to wait for the already long-awaited White Paper. If it does not deal with the issue, I shall write to the Minister for Public Transport to seek further clarification.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

10.48 pm

**Mr. Snape:** We have had quite a long debate, preceded by a comprehensive Committee stage, on a Bill which—as we have said from the outset—is fairly short in substance.

I very much doubt whether the concerns of my hon. Friends who have spoken so eloquently and knowledgeably about conditions in the coal mining industry have been answered satisfactorily at any stage. The fact is that pensioners in the industry have no security, and there has been very little commitment on safety. Indeed, secrecy rather than safety seems to be the Government's motto for the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) dealt extensively with the problems in the industry. I hope that my hon. Friends who spoke so eloquently will forgive me if I turn from the importance of the coal industry to a subject which I am sure they will agree is just as important—the future needs of the railways.

The Government have failed to answer the central question about the need of the railways for finance. For 13 years the Government have starved British Rail of capital investment. No matter what Ministers say or how they try to mislead the House, the Government have cut revenue support for the railway industry to the minimum and have controlled British Rail's spending plans, with civil servants continuously double guessing professional railway men. They have invested heavily, and continue to do so, in the road network, which is free at the point of use, and have ignored the competitive effect of that investment on the railway industry.

For many years the Government have encouraged the use of company cars, now—uniquely in Great Britain—seen as an automatic perk for the better-paid. They have tolerated high road casualty levels and have made little attempt to enforce safety standards, particularly for heavy lorries. Private-sector interest has been shown by companies such as Stagecoach and Virgin. It is based on leasing existing trains from British Rail rather than on investment in new trains. It is a question of new colours rather than new coaches.

The latest proposals, specious as they are, have had an enormous impact on the already declining morale of British Rail's work force. What is there in the Bill to encourage British Rail's work force or the coalminers to respond to the new challenges that they face? What will happen to their jobs, their pensions, their travel facilities? Ministers appear, apparently, not to know. Who will maintain the recruitment and training programmes in both industries and, just as important, who will pay for them? When will the orchestrated media campaign—orchestrated by Treasury Ministers—against British Rail, with its damaging effects on morale, end?

*[Mr. Snape]*

On 6 April this year British Rail completed its most fundamental reoganisation since nationalisation. It was entitled "Organising for Quality." It was designed, so BR management said, to focus on customers' needs—though I notice that they are now passengers again—and to deliver the quality standards required. Less than three months after its completion, the Government's proposals in the Bill require yet another upheaval for railway staff, with the separation of infrastructure from train operation and the establishment of franchise areas. Where is the efficiency in that, and how much more managment and staff time is to be wasted on another reorganisation rather than on operating and running the railway industry?

We have been this way before on many previous occasions. I remind the ideologues in the Conservative party that private ownership of the railway industry is nothing new. The grouping of more than 100 railway companies on a geographical basis in 1923 took place because of the virtual bankruptcy of many of those private companies. The Prime Minister talks about the joys of the brass buttons and the chocolate and cream. He must have been a child prodigy with a vengeance. He is the same age as I am, and I was six when the railway industry was nationalised. I was no child prodigy, I must say, before Conservative Members intervene. However, the Prime Minister talks nostalgically about the great days of the chocolate and cream. That grouping in 1923 lasted for less than 30 years and did not stave off bankruptcy for many of the privately owned railway companies.

In a book well known to railway buffs—"British Railways 1948 to 1973"—its author, T. R. Gourvish, said:

"The financial state of the railways on the eve of nationalisation was worse than it had been in the difficult years of the late 1930s . . . Starved of investment and hampered by the enormous backlog of repairs and renewals, the industry could do no more than offer a product much inferior to that of pre-war days."

That is the experience of private ownership of the railway industry over the years. Privatisation will be inefficient and wasteful. In the case of the mines in particular, it could —as it was in the past—be positively dangerous.

We shall oppose the Bill because we think that it is a bad Bill. We shall oppose the succeeding and detailed legislation tooth and nail.

10.54 pm

**Mr. Barnes:** This is a sad Bill and it has been a rather sad day. Before 10.9 pm, only one Conservative Back Bencher—the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) —had made a speech and he is generally critical of the proposals to privatise railways. No Conservative Members have defended the Bill.

**Mr. Milligan** *rose*——

**Mr. Barnes:** Not before 10.9 pm.

For the bulk of the day, we have been discussing pensions and safety; only Labour Members, the Minister and the hon. Member for Christchurch have spoken. Conservative Members have been silent about a matter of considerable importance.

On Second Reading, the speeches that we heard from Conservative Members tended to be maiden speeches. Some parts of those maiden speeches may have been about the coal industry and British Rail, but generally maiden speeches follow a pattern——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The speeches would not have been in order if they had not covered the Bill.

**Mr. Barnes:** They were in order, but they followed the pattern that maiden speeches generally take. Conservative Members did not deal with the measure before them. They seemed to miss three of their hon. Friends who previously spoke in debates on the coal industry because we won three good victories in Nottingham and got rid of them.

The Bill is a paving measure. It is a peculiar paving measure, because one would expect it not to give the detail of later measures but to say something about the path down which we are going. Some of the speeches that have been made on pensions show that that is not so, that nothing is ruled out and nothing is ruled in and that we do not know what will emerge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was concerned about the railway police, but no idea was given of the role that they will play.

Safety is of the greatest importance to the railway and coal industries, yet it has not been mentioned. Points have been made about the future role of passenger transport executives and regulators. Will there be an Ofrail, as we have had Ofgas?

Privatisation is being pushed on to rail and mining communities, where collectivism, association, comradeship and working together have been considerably to the fore. The pattern might have changed in some areas and pits may be more cosmopolitan than they used to be, but they are based solidly on communities that work together. Even this Government should worry about introducing into those areas the principles of competition, possessive individualism, fighting one's own corner or entrepreneurial values. They should not simply be concerned about pushing the ideological line that they have followed with electricity and gas privatisation.

It is also sad that more and more matters are being removed from parliamentary scrutiny. The Department of Energy has already disappeared, which meant that the Select Committee on Energy also disappeared. In future, questions on rail and coal, which would have been dealt with during Question Time, will be pushed to one side. We have seen that happen with agency agreements, and more and more issues are removed from the Floor of the House.

A consequence of previous privatisations—the same will be true of the Bill—is that little action is taken by the management of the industries involved to defend public provision. The Opposition should be worried about why there was the necessary commitment among the work force but not among the management. The management looked for the opportunities that were availabe under the new entrepreneurship.

As the Government have not prepared a White Paper or the necessary paving Bill, there is still time for them to decide to drop the measure, or are we to wait for a White Paper which might be like a chapter in a book about football by Len Shackleton. The chapter dealt with what the average director knew about football—it was a blank sheet. There is a danger that we shall have a White Paper

which will be as useful as a blank sheet. We want clear information before we can even contemplate allowing the measure to proceed.

11.1 pm

**Mr. Cryer:** Someone shouted that I have just arrived. I have been on the telephone, but I have attended the debate from the early evening and have already participated. I should not have to give that explanation.

The House is a place to debate issues, and it is a measure of the Government's attitude that Conservative Back Benchers want to finish the debate, push the paving Bill through and get another slot in the wrecking of British Rail. That is what the Bill means——

**Mr. Eggar** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Cryer:** The Minister shakes his head, but he should talk to the Minister for Public Transport. The Bill has caused mayhem with the Leeds-Bradford electrification proposals. The passenger transport authority has negotiated with the best faith and the greatest patience, but the Royal Bank of Scotland refused to proceed with leasing because it was critical of the privatisation proposals. It was not prepared to accept that it would be as safe to lease from a private organisation as it would from a public organisation such as the PTA.

The Bill should be withdrawn. It has caused damage, wasted time and led to extra negotiations and difficulties for a perfectly sensible electrification proposal which the Government want. It will also throw into jeopardy a national system of rail transport, which has been built over many years. The national rail system did not arise by chance. There were clearing houses between the private companies, and there will have to be again if there is a franchising operation to ensure that various franchised services work in conjunction rather than against each other. Co-operation is needed for a decent transport service.

The idea of choice is absolutely ludicrous. Several trains cannot leave a station at 10.30 am, especially if they are going in opposite directions, because that would be unsafe. When the Stockton-Darlington first operated in 1825, the idea was that there could be many users of the track. The reason that that was stopped was that the system posed a danger to life and limb.

The Bill is going backwards, not forwards. We shall find that the railway network, instead of encouraging passengers, will put people off by its complexity and uncertainty. Whatever the Minister says, the Bill has cast uncertainty over the railway network, over the management and over the work force who are, by and large, highly dedicated and want to give a decent public service. The Bill will not help and the best thing that the House could do with it is to tear it up.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order—it is certainly bad manners—for junior Ministers and hon. Members to chatter to people who are in the Gallery?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The people concerned are not in part of the Chamber. They are therefore outside the Chamber. However, I agree that there is too much noise. We should be able to hear hon. Members.

11.5 pm

**Mr. Freeman:** We have had extensive debate on the paving Bill and, in Committee and on the Floor of the House, the Bill has been justified and should now pass to another place. Our proposals for the privatisation of British Coal and the introduction of private-sector capital into British Rail will be in the best interests of the work force, of the passengers and of the customers of British Coal. I commend the Bill to the House.

*Question put*, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 278, Noes 216.

**Division No. 44]** **[11.05 pm**

**AYES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Wavaney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Robert G. Hughes and Mr. Tim Boswell.**

**NOES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ms Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronald *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, James
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, William
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Ms Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Ms Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Ms Jane *(L'p'l Br'g'n)*
Khabra, Piara
Kilfoyle, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
MacDonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley

Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Tony

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Ken Eastham and**
**Mr Thomas McAvoy.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*
*Bill read the Third time, and passed.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

### LICENSING (NORTHERN IRELAND)

That the draft Licensing (Validation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 2nd June, be approved.

### CRIMINAL LAW (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990 (Enforcement of Overseas Forfeiture Orders) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 10th June, be approved.

That the draft Confiscation of the Proceeds of Drug Trafficking (Designated Countries and Territories) (Scotland) Amendment Order 1992, which was laid before this House on 10th June, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (9) (European Standing Committees.).*

### MOTOR VEHICLES (NOISE)

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7857/91. relating to noise limits for motor vehicles; and supports the Government in its objectives of seeking the strictest possible limits consistent with technological capability and timing.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Travellers

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr Kirkhope.]*

11.18 pm

**Mr. Michael Spicer** (Worcestershire, South): Many of my hon. Friends have expressed interest in joining in the debate. They have included my hon. Friends the Members for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris), for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), for Newbury (Mrs. Chaplin), for Worcester (Mr. Luff), for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans). In the short time that is allocated to me, it will be impossible to accommodate all or perhaps any of my hon. Friends who may wish to intervene. However, the House will wish to note their interest and that of my other hon. Friends. It certainly suggests the need for a full debate in the near future. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I first raised the subject of travellers in the House some 12 years ago, in 1980, again on a motion for the Adjournment. The invasion that took place at Castlemorton common in my constituency, on Friday 22 May, has prompted me to do so again. On that day, new age travellers, ravers and drugs racketeers arrived at a strength of two motorised army divisions, complete with several massed bands and, above all, a highly sophisticated command and signals system. However, they failed to bring latrines.

The numbers, speed and efficiency with which they arrived—amounting at one time to as many as 30,000 people—combined to terrorise the local community to the extent that some residents had to undergo psychiatric treatment in the days that followed.

Such an incident must never happen again, in my constituency or elsewhere. We need tighter laws, especially to give banning powers to the police; a Cabinet Committee to bring responsible Departments together; quicker and more co-ordinated police action; and a more effective application of existing policies by national and local authorities. The main Acts of Parliament that govern the issue are the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and the Public Order Act 1986. A certain amount of case law also arises, mainly from the miners' strikes of the 1980s.

There is therefore the problem that at least three Departments of State are directly involved in administering the relevant legislation: the Department of the Environment; the Home Office; and the Lord Chancellor's Office. Immediate steps must be taken to co-ordinate those Departments' activities, preferably through the formation of a special Cabinet Committee.

The Public Order Act focuses, in this context, on the law of trespass. Section 39 empowers to senior police officers to direct trespassers to leave land on which more than 12 vehicles have been brought or where there has been threatening or abusive behaviour. That would be all very well, except for the practical problem that, once 20,000 people—invariably accompanied by young children—have committed the trespass, it would require not an army but the Army of at least 100,000 persons to get them off.

The problem of mass gatherings must be dealt with before they take place. Section 39 of the Public Order Act

*[Mr. Michael Spicer]*

could be strengthened to that effect—for instance, by empowering the police to prevent further trespass where a direction to leave has already been given. But the real necessity is that chief constables should be given discretionary powers to ban such gatherings altogether if they decide that they are a threat to public order, in precisely the same way as section 13 of the 1986 Act empowers chief constables to ban public processions. Chief constables may wish to ban all gatherings that have not received an appropriate licence from the local authority.

In parenthesis, even where a licence has been granted, as at Glastonbury last weekend, there is a great problem of crowd control when such large numbers are involved. That is especially true when the crowd starts to disperse, as the police of Devon are finding out at this very moment.

The police argue that, to be effective, a banning power requires early intelligence about the forthcoming event. I think that that is only partly true. A banning order would put off the majority of the normally law-abiding, city-based partygoers. As they provide the bulk of the numbers, not to mention the noise, their absence would make the policing task much easier. There is no doubt, however, that police intelligence and hence their response capability must be greatly improved.

This can be brought about only if there is a great deal more co-operation and co-ordination between police forces. What happens now can almost be characterised as a game of pass the parcel between the forces. Stories—many of them no doubt apocryphal—abound about the police helping to fill up vehicles with petrol in order to get them across their borders and into the territory of another police force. Certainly a blind eye is turned to untaxed vehicles heading in the right direction—that is to say, out of territory.

There remains the wider issue of the extent to which, in a free society, people should be allowed or presented with the opportunity to lead a nomadic life, and the Caravan Sites Act attempts to deal with just that matter, with a core policy of providing permanent and transit sites for gipsies. A major defect of the Act—I hope that it will be dealt with in the review that the Government propose to undertake in line with their commitment to one in the manifesto—lies in the extremely wide definition of gipsies as

"persons of nomadic habit of life".

That has meant, as I discovered when I was the Minister responsible for the matter, that the demand for provided places continually outstrips supply targets.

The police powers triggered by designation under the terms of the Act have in most parts of the country become a mirage. We therefore need a much tighter definition of "gipsy" as someone whose cultural heritage and economic history provide a clear justification for being on the move. With a tighter definition of "gipsy", it would be easier for local authorities to meet their designation targets swiftly, and once designation has been achieved, the police must move decisively against those who camp illegally on other people's land.

It is one thing under the 1968 Act to grant special dispensation—there are many such for gipsies—to those who have a deep-rooted cultural and economic tradition of travelling. It is quite another to provide mobile social security services and to waive the law of trespass for anyone who decides to pick up sticks and shrug off the responsibilities that are the flipside of the rights of individuals provided by a civilised society.

Freedom of choice includes without doubt the right to choose one's life style—until it becomes a threat to the life style of the majority. The threat posed by new age travellers and hippies is to private property and the rule of law. Freedom without law can become anarchy, and the antidote of anarchy is often dictatorship.

It is time the Government acted with a greater sense of urgency and focus against the abuse of property rights and the threat to law posed by illegal encampments on a small and a large scale. The problem, which has been with us for many years, has now reached boiling point. If it is allowed to persist, vigilante groups will spring up and take matters into their own hands; and that way lie anarchy and chaos, not least for the gipsies themselves.

11.28 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) on his success in raising this important issue. I am mindful of the fact that this must be one of the best attended Adjournment debates for some time. A number of my hon. Friends who are present have experience of problems with new age travellers and ravers, and they will no doubt have taken note of what my hon. Friend said. They may also want to ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for the chance of a full debate on this subject in due course.

My hon. Friend is well qualified to speak on this subject because, as he reminded the House, he was Minister of State, Department of the Environment from, I think, January 1990 to November 1990. I appreciate what he says about the need for tighter laws and I shall tell the House about the existing powers and the emphasis that should be placed on co-ordination.

I agree that co-ordination between police forces could be improved, and that such improvement is important in dealing with people on the move. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's comments about co-ordination through a Cabinet Committee are passed to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. My hon. Friend's comments about social security will no doubt be noted by my right hon. and hon. Friends in that Department. Trespass always gives rise to strong feelings.

**Mr. Colin Shepherd** (Hereford): The Minister moved quickly over the issue of social security. Does he agree that that is the nub of the matter in so far as the life style of the new age travellers is sustained by what my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) called mobile social security? Regulations enable such people to pick up social security payments anywhere in the country. Time and again, lay-bys in my constituency are full of new age travellers who are unable to move on because they have not got their girocheques. Can the Minister tell us more about the liaison between his Department and the Department of Social Security, because such liaison will enable us to grasp the nettle?

**Mr. Wardle:** As a result of what my hon. Friend has said, he can be assured that the issue will be raised with the Department of Social Security. I agree that the present system is an inducement and should be closely examined.

The problems that we are debating arise from the combination of ravers and new age travellers, and I should like to address the aspects of the problem that concern, first and foremost, the Home Office. However, I shall touch on the Department of the Environment.

During the summer travelling season, the incidence of unlawful occupation causes great distress to local communities and landowners. I assure the House that the Government are firmly committed to tackling the nuisance of illegal encampments in the most effective manner. The events in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South at Castlemorton common over the May bank holiday were exceptional by any standards. My other hon. Friends who are present for the debate have had similar experiences, but this was an exceptional and deeply unpleasant weekend. My hon. Friend spoke with deep feeling about the unpleasant scenes that unfolded in what is normally a beautiful part of rural England.

I condemn the lawlessness and lack of common decency shown by some of those who camped on Castlemorton common. It is unacceptable for people to try to put themselves beyond the reach of the law by acting together in huge numbers. There is no excuse for the abandonment of common decency, and I have every sympathy with those whose normally peaceful life was so rudely disrupted.

No one, including my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South, would deny that people have a right to lead a nomadic life if they so choose, but it is quite intolerable for people to behave in contravention of the law and with complete disregard for the rights of others. Faced with these events, my hon. Friend is right to ask what else the police can do, to what degree further co-ordination would help deal with the problem, and whether new powers should be made available to the police.

Mass gatherings present particular problems. The difficulty faced by the police when dealing with mass invasions such as that at Castlemorton common is not so much what powers they have as how to apply them—as I think my hon. Friend has recognised. The problem is as much logical as legal. The most effective measures that the police can take to deal with new age travellers are preventive. They can make sure that their intelligence gathering is good and that liaison with neighbouring forces and local authorities is close. If the police can monitor the movements of travellers, measures can be taken to try to ensure that the numbers do not build up in any one locality to unmanageable proportions.

**Sir Jim Spicer** (Dorset, West): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Wardle:** As time for the debate is limited, perhaps my hon. Friend would allow me to make some more progress. I shall return to him.

Local authorities and landlords may be able to take action to prevent trespass on their land. For example, prior to the gathering on Castlemorton common, both Avon and Somerset and Gloucestershire constabularies were able to enforce injunctions to prevent travellers assembling on commons in their areas.

**Sir Jim Spicer:** I understand the constraints of time, but I am glad of the opportunity to make this one point. We are not just looking at landowners and farmers: we are looking also at our police forces, and they are not those directly involved in this incident. In all the counties represented by my hon. Friends who are here, hundreds of police are being diverted weekend after weekend by these miserable people, and this has to be stopped.

**Mr. Wardle:** My hon. Friend is right, and that is why co-ordination between police forces to try to deal with these circumstances as they build up is important.

It is worth pointing out that, where necessary, chief constables can request mutual aid, as my hon. Friend knows, from neighbouring forces, and, where the scale grows, arrangements can quickly be put into place to supply the host area with additional manpower.

If, for whatever reason, the police cannot prevent huge numbers from establishing themselves on a site, inevitably they will decide to adopt a policy of containment, as happened at Castlemorton. We must bear in mind that the police have a delicate balance to maintain between dealing with crime and provoking disorder. There is only so much that one can do once a crowd of 20,000 has assembled. It would have been of no benefit to local residents that May weekend if insensitive action had provoked a full-scale riot.

Besides containment, the police can be expected to provide protection to local residents, as they did at Castlemorton, and mount an operation to tackle the drugs problems. The House will be interested to know that there were 73 arrests at the Castlemorton incident and another 74 cautions, all connected with drugs.

**Mr. Paul Marland** (Gloucestershire, West): The problem is not only the large gatherings—Castlemorton has highlighted the problems they cause—but the small ones. The police can move in if there are 13 vehicles, but if there are 12 they cannot, although that is just as terrifying and alarming for the landowners and the people in the district. These people go to isolated areas where there are a few houses, often occupied by elderly people, as has happened in my constituency on May hill, which my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) will know. When they eventually go, the local community dig deep ditches and put huge piles of stone and large tree trunks across entrances so that nobody else can get in to enjoy these rural beauty spots, and the innocent picnickers or ramblers are denied access to the sites.

**Mr. Wardle:** I understand entirely what my hon. Friend has said: small-scale gatherings can be just as alarming as large-scale ones. I hope that the House will allow me to make progress by going through the powers that already exist and setting out Government actions.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has called for a full report from the chief constable of West Mercia on the policing of the events of Castlemorton common and on any lessons to be learned from it. My noble Friend the Minister of State is this week meeting chief constables to consider the powers available to the police service, the intelligence and liaison arrangements between forces, and their tactics for handling large gatherings. We shall consider what action may be necessary after consultation with those chief officers.

It is important to emphasise that the effect of successful police operations to prevent travellers gathering at particular locations is to split them up and move them on. The Government have looked hard at the issue of trespass on land, and there are no easy answers. Existing legislation provides a number of remedies for landowners to deal with

*[Mr. Wardle]*

trespass on land by those who intend to reside. The vast majority of cases of trespass are resolved, as they should be, either informally or through the civil courts.

The Caravan Sites Act 1968, with which my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South said that he was familiar, also has an important role to play. This Act places a duty on local authorities to provide adequate official sites for gipsies—this is the definition that my hon. Friend used—resorting to or residing in their area. For these purposes, gipsies are defined as

"persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin."

The courts have given clear indications that, in this context "gipsy" has a broad definition.

Once a local authority has provided sufficient sites and thus become designated under the 1968 Act it has access, through the magistrates court, to move gipsies off any unauthorised site, whether owned privately or by the local authority, but despite the provision of 100 per cent. Exchequer grant for official sites, provision has not kept pace with the growth in the number of gipsy vehicles, as so defined, in England and Wales. Some 300 sites have been provided in all, including 10 in Hereford and Worcester.

Twenty-two years after the implementation of the 1968 Act, only 38 per cent. of district councils in England have been designated, and only one district council in Wales. So there are not enough sites provided by local authorities for the growing number of travellers—travellers within the broader definition. We are well aware of the difficulty that new age travellers do not always wish to occupy authorised sites but want instead to roam freely across the country where they please. We are also familiar with the argument that powers available to designated authorities under the 1968 Act are too cumbersome to deal quickly with the problem of persistent illegal camping. In addition, even where eviction powers may be used against those who are camped illegally, the effect may be to place them within the ranks of the statutorily homeless.

The Conservative party manifesto of this year recognised these problems, and the deficiencies in the legislative framework provided in the Caravan Sites Act 1968 for dealing with them. It undertook to tackle the problem by reviewing the 1968 Act, with the aim of reducing the nuisance of illegal encampments. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—is taking the lead in this review. The Government hope shortly to be able to issue a consultation paper with proposals for reform, and will no doubt take account of what my hon. Friend has said this evening.

However, the question about the way the law seeks to deal with large gatherings, as well as smaller ones, and associated problems, such disorder and noise, is likely to remain. The police have the power at common law to order a crowd to disperse if they apprehend that a breach of the peace is likely to take place. They may also take steps to limit or prevent the build-up of a crowd by turning back people or vehicles if they consider that a breach of the peace is imminent. If necessary, the police may arrest as a result of or in order to prevent a breach of the peace.

Section 39 of the Public Order Act 1986, to which my hon. Friend referred, was conceived during the passage of the Public Order Bill in response to the mass invasions of land in around Stonehenge during the summer of 1986. Section 39 gives the police the discretionary power to direct trespassers to leave land where two or more trespassers have entered the land with the purpose of residing there, and the owner or occupier has asked them to leave; and if any of the trespassers is threatening or abusive; or if any of the trespassers causes damage; or if the trespassers between them bring 12 or more vehicles onto the land. Section 39 is not a substitute for normal civil procedures, but it provides a limited criminal sanction to deal with aggravated trespass.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (Cornwall, North): The Minister will be aware that, in Davidstow in north Cornwall, we had an invasion by very large numbers. Subsequently, the police, the landowners and the commoners felt that section 39 was not sufficient to deal with the problem. That was 12 months ago. I wonder whether the Home Office has taken account of that experience.

**Mr. Wardle:** It has. In fact, I am about to refer to a review of section 39.

In 1990, we undertook a thorough public evaluation of section 39 to assess how its relatively new powers were working. The review showed that, when used, the section provided a quick and effective remedy. On 22 May 1991, the then Home Secretary announced that no change to the law was required. The powers were there; it was a question of how they were used.

Apart from trespass, problems can also arise over noise nuisance where parties are held on the land. Where the local authority has adopted such measures, entertainment licensing laws under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 apply inter alia to rave parties. Where there is an entertainment on private land, therefore, in order to be legal, it must be licensed —provided, of course, that the local authority has taken up the available powers.

The police have no general power under entertainment licensing legislation to seize equipment used for parties, but their powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 allow them to seize material which might be needed for evidential purposes to prevent its being lost, stolen or destroyed. As to noise, I understand that the Environmental Protection Act 1990 provides for environmental health officers to confiscate audio equipment to secure compliance with a noise abatement notice.

The measures that I have listed constitute a considerable array of powers which are available to the police and local authorities. Additionally, of course, the civil and criminal law apply.

I do not, therefore, wish to underestimate the difficulties of tackling the problem. Nevertheless, I can reassure my hon. Friend and the House we are examining whether and how the current position can be improved. The Government will do everything sensible that they can to remedy a difficult situation.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 30 June 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ULSTER BANK BILL *[Lords]*

*Read the Third time, and passed without amendment.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## DEFENCE

### Diversification

1. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what initiatives he proposes to take to assist conversion and diversification in the defence sector; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** We have no plans to take any such initiatives. Decisions affecting the future of a company, including its product lines, are best left to the commercial judgment of the firm's management.

**Mr. Barnes:** About 1 million jobs in this country depend, directly or indirectly, on defence expenditure. If we are to have a peace dividend and to prevent the non-proliferation of weapons among those who should not have them, diversification and conversion are required. Why do we not adopt the approach that we take towards eastern Europe, and provide conversion know-how in this country also?

**Mr. Aitken:** I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's argument, even though he exaggerated the number of jobs that are directly or indirectly connected with defence. His idea of spending taxpayers' money on a new quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation is misguided. The best way forward for defence diversification is for ideas to come from the companies themselves.

**Mr. Viggers:** Does my hon. Friend agree that history is littered with unrealistic socialist dreams of agencies to beat swords into ploughshares? Are not the managers of the companies concerned best placed to make long-term strategic decisions? If the Government were to intervene, would not the long-term result be unhelpful?

**Mr. Aitken:** My hon. Friend is perfectly right. Right hon. and hon. Members with long memories will recall the disastrous experiments with taxpayers' money by the National Enterprise Board. We cannot have Government second-guessing of industry, financed by the taxpayer.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** That was a very disappointing answer. Is the Minister aware that conversion and diversification policy is needed in the Cowal area in my constituency following the departure of the United States navy? Is he aware also that last week the Ministry of Defence advertised the former United States buildings for sale on the open market? Will the Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence undertake to reconsider that decision, with a view to the MOD's reaching a financial agreement with the United States navy and handing over the buildings to the local enterprise company, which is at the very heart of the recovery strategy for the area?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Lady is living in a time warp—in a bygone age. It is not for the Government to spend taxpayers' money on such diversifications. We have an interest in making sure that taxpayers' money is wisely spent. The decision to place that land on the market at a fair price is much the best solution.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** Even though concern about defence employment comes ill from the Labour party in view of recent considerations, does my hon. Friend acknowledge that many jobs in the south-west are dependent on the aircraft industry and docks and, in my constituency, effective firms such as Avimo and the MOD's hydrographic division? Will my hon. Friend give whatever consideration he can to preserving those jobs where possible and to future activities where such jobs have to be run down?

**Mr. Aitken:** My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that Labour has consistently advocated massive defence cuts—of 27 per cent. at its last party conference. I agree with my hon. Friend that we must consider carefully the significant number of jobs involved, but, with a procurement budget alone of £9 billion a year, there is scope for creating a strong and thriving defence industry that provides many jobs, despite the current difficulties created by the undoubtedly necessary defence spending rundown.

**Mr. Rogers:** I am sure that all hon. Members—with the exception of a few Conservative Members—will be disappointed by the Minister's answer. I know that his predecessor washed his hands of the defence industry, but I thought that the present Minister might be a little more sympathetic. Does he not understand that workers in the industry, like service men and women, have given a lifetime of service to this country? Surely, at a time of necessary cuts, the Government can make at least the minimum contribution. May I also point out that the only mention of an agency was made by the Minister himself?

**Mr. Aitken:** It seems from the hon. Gentleman's final point that he has forgotten that the first mention of a defence diversification agency appeared in his party's election manifesto. It is also mentioned in the question.

The basic difference between the parties is this: the Government believe that it does not place the taxpayer and civil servants in the best position to try to second-guess industry's own wish to diversify. Many defence companies are doing that very successfully already and they should be encouraged to continue.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said in answer to Opposition Members. Will he reassure us, however, that he fully accepts that the

Ministry of Defence has a prime responsibility in delineating the key technologies that the defence industry is likely to be asked to supply in the immediate future?

**Mr. Aitken:** Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that reassurance. We continue to take the Defence Research Agency's work in new technologies very seriously, and we are communicating more and more openly with industry about the technologies of the future, on which we expect to spend more of the defence budget.

## Range Safety Certificates

2. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to change the system of granting range safety certificates.

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton):** There are no plans to do so.

**Mr. Jones:** I am sorry to hear that, because a ludicrous situation has arisen in my constituency. A civilian gun club at Ruthin wishes to build a safe range; unfortunately, the only source of advice is the Ministry of Defence, and the gun club has no way of checking the accuracy of that advice because the handbook on which it is based is classified. Will the Minister declassify that document—or is he scared that Saddam Hussein will build safer ranges than ours?

**Mr. Hamilton:** That question is misleading. If the gun club applies through the National Rifle Association, it will be able to gain access to all the information contained in the booklet. That booklet is restricted—the lowest form of classification—because it is a training document, and we classify all our training documents.

The National Rifle Association will point the way ahead. I gather that consultation is under way and that the gun club is complying with many of the regulations. We hope to be able to send a military man down soon, so that he can check the place out and give the club the cover that it wants.

## Diversification

3. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts concerning the provision of advice and assistance to other countries on the diversification of defence industries.

**Mr. Aitken:** Advice to the countries of central and eastern Europe and the Soviet Union on the diversification of defence industries has been provided by experts from the private sector under the auspices of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council.

**Mr. Hutton:** All NATO Governments are committed, under the terms of the 1991 Copenhagen declaration, to providing practical support for the defence industries of eastern Europe in regard to diversification. Does the Minister agree with his German and United States counterparts that successful diversification stategies need the active assistance of Government? Will he also explain to my constituents why the Government are prepared to support diversification initiatives in eastern Europe but not similar initiatives in this country?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman may have missed some vital words in my original answer. I said that advice would be provided by experts from the private sector. Advice from the the private sector is not really necessary in a country such as ours. We do not need special Government intervention because we already have a free enterprise economy and private companies are already in touch with experts from the private sector. In the nationalised industries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, some form of NATO umbrella is probably helpful, ensuring that the countries concerned consult the best private-sector experts.

**Mrs. Angela Knight:** Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most useful forms of assistance that we can give the former Soviet Union countries is help with the safe dismantling and storage of their nuclear weapons? What assistance is the United Kingdom giving in that regard?

**Mr. Aitken:** As a result of discussions between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Yeltsin earlier this year, we have now agreed to give the Russian Government 250 super-containers and 20 special vehicles for the safe and secure transport of nuclear weapons. We are also providing technical advice on the disabling and destruction of nuclear weapons in the arsenal of the former Soviet Union. We expect the first equipment in that programme to be delivered in the middle of next year. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that it is a very positive form of assistance for those countries and that it will encourage greater stability and security in the regions involved.

**Ms. Eagle:** Will the Minister tell me how I should explain to workers at Cammell Laird in Wallasey the help that he is giving to eastern European countries to diversify their defence industries while there is absolutely no help for domestic defence industries? Will he also explain why, given that the peace dividend is going to all taxpayers, its results are to be visited on only a very few members of the community in areas such as Wallasey and Birkenhead?

**Mr. Aitken:** Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd., which is the main company affecting the hon. Lady's constituency interests, is already diversifying into offshore oil rigs, for example, without having to have special advice from a new quango or from civil servants. Private-sector advice in the countries of the former Soviet Union under the NATO umbrella is more easily obtained from direct contacts between industry and the private sector. That is the most effective channel of communication in this country.

## RAF Pilots

4. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force pilots have left within 10 years of qualifying as pilots in each of the past three years.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The number of Royal Air Force pilots leaving the service within 10 years of qualifying as pilots was 88 in 1989-90, 66 in 1990-91 and 44 in 1991-92.

**Mr. Townsend:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that interesting and encouraging reply. Will he confirm that it costs more than £4·4 million to train a Tornado pilot these

days? Is it not therefore essential that his Department goes out of its way to retain our extremely well-trained, effective and efficient RAF pilots?

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes. The figure that I have for training is more like £3 million, but even that is a very large sum. We do all that we can to retain people who have cost so much to train. The rate at which they leave depends very much on the health of the airline business generally. There may be signs that it will pick up in future; then, of course, companies find it very profitable to bribe away our well-trained pilots rather than to train their own.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** When considering the question of Royal Air Force pilots leaving early, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the proposal that anyone who is trained at public expense to fly RAF aircraft should have a duty for the rest of his flying life to make himself available as and when required, probably on a voluntary part-time basis, to the reserve forces? That seems to be the best way to get value for taxpayers' money.

**Mr. Hamilton:** Yes, I agree absolutely. Anyone who leaves prematurely has to spend four years on reserve, and in that way we get some value for the money that we spend.

## Trident

5. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much Government money has been spent on Trident since 1987; and how much more is expected to be spent before completion.

10. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most recent estimated total cost of the Trident programme; and if he will make a statement.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** The estimated total cost of the Trident procurement programme is £10·5 billion, of which 60 per cent. has been spent so far.

**Mr. Wray:** Does the Secretary of State agree that he is misleading the House——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am sure that on reflection the hon. Gentleman will begin his question again.

**Mr. Wray:** Does the Secretary of State agree that he is being economic with the truth and that it is nonsense to talk about £10·5 billion? Given that there are four submarines, each submarine taking 128 missiles, making 512 missiles in all, given that the strategic arms reduction talks between America and Russia are expanding and given that the Secretary of State has agreed to dismantle Nimrod and Sea Harrier, could not the global cost be in the region of £33 billion?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to a rather extravagant estimate made by Greenpeace which has already been substantially discredited. I prefer to rest on the conclusion of the Select Committee on Defence, which looked into the cost of Trident and commented on what it described as

"the gratifying and unusual spectacle of a major defence procurement programme coming in far below estimate."

**Mr. Welsh:** Will the Secretary of State tell us at exactly what he intends targeting the up to 512 new Trident warheads—French trawlers? Which would be the more effective at Sarajevo airport—one of the Scots regiments which he is disbanding to save a pittance or the Trident missile system, costing up to £32 billion, which is unnecessary, badly over budget and of no real purpose? Saving Scots regiments would represent value for money; Trident missiles do not.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman appears to be unaware of the fact that even at the end of the 10-year programme of reducing strategic nuclear weapons as a result of the agreement between President Bush and President Yeltsin, Russia and the United States will still have more than 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads. He appears to be unaware that President Yeltsin said that the British and French deterrents were so relatively small in number that it was foolish to try to draw a comparison between the British and French deterrents and the agreement that he had reached with President Bush. The reluctance of the Scottish National party to dedicate its interest to the proper defence of its country is well known north of the border.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Is it not a fact that the Labour party is yet again up to—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] When it comes to discussing the estimated cost of Trident, the fact is—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. If hon. Members would remain silent, I could hear what the hon. Lady is saying. I should then know whether she needs correcting.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I shall try again, Madam Speaker. Is it not a fact that when we are talking about the cost of Trident, the Labour party——

**Hon. Members:** Out of order.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Please let me give some guidance to the hon. Lady. The Secretary of State has no responsibility for Labour party policy. The hon. Lady should, therefore, frame her question in a way that gives the Secretary of State responsibility for answering.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I shall rephrase the question, Madam Speaker. Is it not correct that the real estimated costs of Trident are well below those forecast by the Opposition? I understand that they are well below 2 per cent. of the defence budget. Trident is, therefore, a deterrent well worth having for Britain.

**Mr. Rifkind:** Neither I nor the Leader of the Opposition has responsibility for Labour party policy, so no one in the Chamber could respond to that point. My hon. Friend is correct. The cost of Trident over the period of procurement is less than 2·5 per cent. of the defence budget. That puts the matter into proportion. Trident is of enormously important value in Britain's defence requirements.

**Mr. Richards:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the independent nuclear deterrent is the only absolute guarantee that this country will never be invaded and, as such, is the ultimate in cost effectiveness?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Yes, my hon. Friend is entirely correct. The defence strategy that has been pursued since the end of the second world war has more than vindicated the nuclear policy of both this country and the United States. But for that policy, we should not have seen the collapse

of the Warsaw pact, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the re-emergence of a potentially free and democratic Russia.

**Mr. Bennett:** If the Secretary of State is so keen to demonstrate to the House that his figures are accurate and that Greenpeace's figures are wrong, will he tell us, in his figures, how much he has put in for the eventual decommissioning of Trident and for making safe the nuclear material involved?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Decommissioning of all vessels, especially nuclear vessels, is ultimately required. For Trident, the decommissioning will not take place for a good 30 years. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that all the costs directly attributable to the Trident programme are included in the cost of £10·5 billion to which I referred.

## Nuclear Deterrent

6. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the nuclear deterrent.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I have received a number of representations on this subject.

**Mr. Marshall:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the independent deterrent has provided this country with peace and security for 47 years? Has he received any representations from the 100 hon. Members who are members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? Are not they, rather than the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), the authentic voice of the Labour party?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is difficult to know what is the authentic voice of the Labour party. Some two thirds of the members of the shadow Cabinet have or had an association with CND. I believe that at present, however, it is the policy of both the Government and the Opposition for Britain to keep nuclear weapons. That is certainly what the Labour party said during the last election, but whether that will be the Labour's policy in future is something on which we can only speculate and one of the great mysteries of the world in which we live.

**Mr. Cryer:** If Trident nuclear weapons and Polaris are providing such a wonderful defence for freedom, what does the Secretary of State say to other nations about their potential for nuclear deterrence? Does he tell countries in the middle east that nuclear weapons are a safeguard for peace and advocate that middle eastern countries should have nuclear weapons? Does he agree that he should abide by the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, clause 6 of which commits this country—as we are signatories to the treaty—to get rid of nuclear weapons? When will this country and the Government stop cheating on the treaty?

**Mr. Rifkind:** If the hon. Gentleman checked his facts before making wild allegations, he would realise that not only are we signatories to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty but, over the past 12 months, either I or my predecessor has announced the ending of nuclear artillery; the ending of the application of nuclear warheads to Lance missiles; the reduction in the number of nuclear dual-capable aircraft and, only two weeks ago, the ending of Britain's maritime tactical nuclear capacity. We are perfectly prepared to see any reduction in our nuclear potential when that is consistent with the ultimate safety of this country. The hon. Gentleman's disinclination to give priority to the ultimate defence of this country is well known.

**Mr. Brazier:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a nuclear threat can be deterred only by a nuclear deterrent and that Britain's independent nuclear deterrent has been vital to this country for more than 40 years for that reason? Does he further agree that the size of the fearsome armoury that still remains in the ex-Soviet republics and the spread of nuclear technology to some of the ugliest regimes in the middle east further emphasise the importance of maintaining Trident?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Sadly, my hon. Friend is entirely correct. I should have thought that our recent experience in the Gulf, when it became clear that the Iraqi Government had been seeking to develop a nuclear capacity, would be a clear warning to those who seek to deny this country the ultimate right to defend its people.

**Dr. Reid:** Will the Secretary of State try to explain to us the rationale behind the vast increase in the number of Trident warheads? The Government have told us over the past few years that we required the 250 per cent. increase in Trident warhead numbers over Polaris because of improved Russian anti-ballistic missile systems. The same Government are now acquiescing in United States-Russian co-operation to improve those anti-ballistic missile systems in Russia even further. Can the Secretary of State explain the absurd inconsistency that lies at the heart of the Government's approach?

**Mr. Rifkind:** There is no inconsistency whatsoever. The hon. Gentleman seems to forget conveniently the decision taken by a previous Labour Government to enhance Polaris through the Chevaline project because of their realisation that the defences against the nuclear deterrent had been increased at that time. In the same way, we have had to indicate the minimum nuclear deterrent required to ensure the protection of this country against any nuclear threat that it might face.

As for anti-ballistic missile defences, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that there is an anti-ballistic missile treaty. Any proposals to change that treaty would require the most careful attention, consistent with the credibility and effectiveness of the nuclear deterrents that we and the United States possess.

**Mr. Rupert Allason:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the decision taken by the Labour Government to adopt an independent nuclear deterrent has helped to keep the peace in post-war Europe? Does he further agree that there is a residual problem of decommissioning some of the atomic submarines? Have the Government come to any conclusions about what to do with them?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We are giving active consideration to our long-term policy on decommissioning of nuclear submarines. My hon. Friend is correct that the original decisions on nuclear weapons were shared by both sides of the House. It is unfortunate that the Labour party went through—and may still be going through—a spasm of hostility to the defence needs of Britain.

## European Fighter Aircraft

**7. Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the European fighter aircraft project.

**Mr. Rifkind:** As the House will be aware, the German Defence Minister has indicated his belief that Germany should not participate in the production phase of the programme. With my Italian and Spanish colleagues, we have made clear to him our view that the EFA continues to represent the most cost-effective solution to the requirement.

**Dr. Strang:** While I recognise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the Prime Minister, supported by the Opposition, have rightly done all that they can to persuade the Germans to stay on board, may I put it to the Secretary of State that even without the German order for more than 100 aeroplanes it is decisively in the national interest that the project should go ahead? Is it not the case that by the end of the century we shall require a new fighter aeroplane at least as good as any modified MiG 29, and that to buy an American alternative would not only cost the taxpayer more in the long run but lead to the loss of thousands of jobs and the elimination of Britain's capability in an important area of advanced technology?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I pay tribute not only to the Opposition parties but to my hon. Friends who have demonstrated convincingly the virtually unanimous view of the House that the European fighter aircraft is consistent with the defence interests of the United Kingdom. We believe that it is also in the interests of Germany. Indeed, many within Germany take that view. What one finds most difficult to understand about the German position is that the Germans acknowledge that they will need a new fighter aircraft, they are not aware what their alternative to the EFA would be and, in the absence of any conclusion to that effect, it is difficult to understand how they can believe that whatever option they ultimately chose would necessarily bring any saving. With the Select Committee, we believe that EFA represents the best value for money and is absolutely consistent with our defence requirements.

**Mr. Mans:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the view of the German Defence Minister that it is possible to produce a simpler aircraft more cheaply using research money from the EFA project is not viable? Does he agree that we would end up with an inferior aircraft that would cost us more?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I regret to say that my hon. Friend is almost certainly correct. It seems certain that if Herr Rühe's proposal for a lighter EFA were taken forward it would result in the waste of the billions of pounds that have so far been spent on the development stage of the project. It would also probably result in up to five years' delay before the aircraft could be made available. That would not be consistent with our defence requirements.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** While I in no sense devalue the military and economic arguments in favour of the European fighter aircraft progamme, does the Secretary of State agree that the political implications of a German withdrawal are equally significant? At a time when necessary and inevitable efforts are being made to strengthen the European defence pillar, would not a German withdrawal from the EFA programme prejudice those efforts?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is difficult to understand the German position. Germany has been a good European partner over the years. It is not consistent with that reputation to consider withdrawing from the most important example of European defence collaboration that exists.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor:** My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that we all agree with his conclusion that the EFA is important to our future defence interests. He will also be aware of the deep anxiety which many of us feel that our ground forces have already been pared to the bone. Can he give an assurance that, whatever happens to the EFA and whatever additional cost it might involve to Her Majesty's Government, no further cuts will be made in our ground force capability?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I would hope that, whatever the ultimate German decision on the EFA, the economies that have been identified in recent weeks will still be available to us. I hope that the rationalisation of industrial production which could follow any German decision to withdraw will not have cost implications. I assure my hon. Friend that our ground forces are an important priority to me.

**Mr. Eric Clarke:** Can the Minister give us a guarantee that a contingency plan will be drawn up in the event of the Germans withdrawing from the EFA? As my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) said, there could be job losses in the area that we represent and it is important for the next generation of technology that we go ahead with the project. May we have a guarantee from the Minister that we shall go ahead with it?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. He will appreciate that, in the event of such a German announcement, the first requirement would be for me to have discussions with my Spanish and Italian colleagues and to ensure, we hope, that they also wish the project to continue. That would be the first priority, and I hope that we would have a common purpose to continue with the project and bring it to a successful conclusion.

**Mr. Alexander:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, while the Tornado did great service in the Gulf, it is not a combat aircraft and it was never engaged in combat during that conflict? Does he further agree that all the expert advice that he receives from the Royal Air Force suggests that we must have a fighter to replace Tornado at the earliest possible time?

**Mr. Rifkind:** It is indeed the case that the Tornado is unlikely to have the capacity of the most modern Russian aircraft. As my hon. Friend will be aware, it is intended that when the EFA comes into operation it will have both an air defence and a ground attack role and will therefore be able to meet our defence requirements well into the next century.

**Mr. O'Neill:** The Secretary of State knows that the House is united in support of the programme. Will he guarantee that, in the event of a German withdrawal, we shall have the opportunity to debate the issue, and that the House will get the most up-to-date reports of the intentions of the Italians and Spaniards? We hope that they will continue with the programme. Above all else, as

well as national defence, our interests in the House are in the defence of the 40,000 workers whose jobs could well depend on the project during the next 25 years. It is essential that a dialogue continues across the House and with our allies to ensure that the programme carries on, even if it is in a modified form.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that debates in the House are not a matter for me. I appreciate the important contribution that he and his hon. Friends have made in supporting the Government's representations to the German Government. I certainly hope to keep him and the House informed of progress on the matter as and when it takes place.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend needs no reminding that the allied air forces' air superiority in the Gulf war—their ability to keep the Iraqi air forces on the ground and to neutralise Saddam Hussein's ground formations—saved many thousands of lives. The EFA will be an air superiority aeroplane, able to intercept and to offer effective offensive support to our troops, and as such it will be essential to the Royal Air Force for the next 20 to 25 years. Can my right hon. and learned Friend guarantee that, whatever the circumstances, the Government will procure it?

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of that aircraft. The Select Committee on Defence made a valuable contribution when it concluded unanimously that there was no alternative aircraft in the world which could meet the Royal Air Force's defence requirements and do so in such a cost-efficient manner. It would be my desire that the project should continue, irrespective of the German decision, but, clearly, if the Germans decide to withdraw, the first obligation will be to discuss the implications with the allies taking part in the project and to come to a decision in the light of those discussions.

## Arms Sales

8. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which countries Ministers have visited in the last year for which the purpose of the visit included promotion of arms sales.

**Mr. Aitken:** Ministers in my Department during all visits abroad take the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern—including, where appropriate, defence exports. I shall write to the hon. Member providing her with a list of such visits by Defence Ministers in the past year.

**Mrs. Kennedy:** Does the Minister accept that the Government will have to adopt greater openness in defence matters and, in particular, provide more detailed information on arms and defence equipment sales to specific countries? If the allegations in Sunday's edition of *The Observer* are true concerning the GCHQ phone tap of the Lonrho organisation in 1989, under the instruction of the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, does he accept that that merely underlines the scepticism that the Opposition feel about the sudden-found commitment to open government, as claimed by the Government? We shall monitor the Government's performance in that regard with particular interest.

**Mr. Aitken:** In general terms, the Government support greater transparency concerning arms export matters. There is no question of allowing defence exports on an indiscriminate basis. We are playing our full part in the various international discussions on arms exports that have followed the Gulf war. We are also playing a full part in terms of the new United Nations register, which was set up largely as a result of the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. We, too, await the greater emphasis on new information that that register will provide. I should make it clear, however, that there must be an element of confidentiality in any form of Government-to-Government negotiation. That has been the normal practice in defence export matters under successive Governments, both Labour and Conservative.

**Mr. Churchill:** Is my hon. Friend aware of recent reports suggesting that at least one British defence contractor has supplied equipment to India which would help that country to acquire a nuclear weapons capability in contravention of the British Government's embargo on the export of such equipment? Is it not time that British and European defence contractors were put on notice by their Governments that they cannot expect to receive Government contracts if they breach their own Government's embargoes in this particularly sensitive matter?

**Mr. Aitken:** My hon. Friend is entirely right. Any breaches of those Government embargoes are treated as a most serious matter and will be thoroughly investigated.

**Mr. O'Neill:** Does the Minister recall that during his days on the Back Benches he was an eloquent supporter of open government? Does he recall his speech to the House on 2 February 1989 on the Official Secrets Bill, when he claimed that the House had been misled 20 years earlier over the sale of arms to Nigeria? Does he not think, now that he is a Minister, that history could well be repeating itself with his refusal to come clean about our arms deals in the past decade with Iran and Iraq?

**Mr. Aitken:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his moling in *Hansard*, but he draws a false conclusion from it. There has been a substantial sea change in Whitehall under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, away from the old habits of unnecessary secrecy which were championed ferociously 18 years ago by the then Labour Prime Minister and Front-Bench spokesmen. Now there is greater emphasis on a new era of more responsible openness in all matters.

## Relocation

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the relocation of departmental staff and service personnel from sites in the south to ones in the north of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** In line with Government policy, the Ministry of Defence aims to locate its work wherever best value for money can be obtained, taking account of the operational requirements of the Department.

**Mr. Bayley:** Will the Minister pay tribute to the city of York for its long and proud history as a garrison town and its proven track record as an Army administration centre,

with the regimental pay offices based there? Will he confirm that the current investigation by the Ministry of Defence into the establishment of an integrated Army personnel centre will include the city of York on the short list of possible bases for that centre?

**Mr. Hamilton:** I am happy to pay tribute to the city of York, which has been home to many units of the British Army and has played a great role as a garrison city. It has been proposed that we might do better to concentrate the entire manning and records office in one place, but it has also been suggested that we should consider more than one location. The investigation is still considering those possibilities and we hope to report on it soon.

**Mr. Devlin:** When will the Minister make a decision on the future of Royal Navy Support Command? Is he aware that this is a crucial test of whether the Government intend to relocate facilities from the south to the north or from the north to the south, with the possible loss of about 170 jobs in my constituency resulting from the move to Bath?

**Mr. Hamilton:** As my hon. Friend knows, we are still working towards a decision on the question. I am sore about the whole idea of moving 180 jobs at RNSC Eaglescliffe from the north into the Bath area. On the other hand, it is thought that there are great economies of scale to be achieved by co-locating all those staff in one premises. We shall have to examine the matter closely and see how the cost analysis adds up.

### Open Government

11. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he intends to apply the Government's principles of open government to his Department.

**Mr. Aitken:** My Department will fully implement the Government's policies on open government while continuing to discharge our duty to protect the material which needs to be protected.

**Mr. McAllion:** Will the Minister give a commitment that the chief executive of the next steps agencies and other senior officials in his Department will consult and negotiate with the appropriate trade unions at the beginning of the process of market testing and at each stage throughout the process? Does he accept that if the Government are to be really open, the process must begin with Government Departments being seen to be open and fair in all their dealings with their own employees?

**Mr. Aitken:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman's last statement. The Government place great emphasis on their market testing initiative, which gives the opportunity for greater value for money and those savings being employed at the sharp end of defence spending. As for taking the unions into the Government's confidence, we are willing to be candid about what the plans are likely to be for market testing. That is the only way to approach the matter.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Robertson:** On behalf of the people of Aberdeen, South, I extend to my right hon. Friend every best wish as he prepares to take on the presidency of the European Council. Given that there is concern about too much centralism in Europe, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Maastricht treaty, with its emphasis on subsidiarity, starts to reverse many of the centralising tendencies of previous treaties? Does he recall that it was in the Single European Act that the first commitment to economic and monetary union was based and that qualified majority voting was extended to a number of key areas?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The Single European Act was very far reaching. It secured, first and foremost, the single market commitments which are necessary to fair trading throughout Europe. It also represented the most far-reaching amendments since our entry into the Community under the treaty of Rome. It increased majority voting by a significant extent and did a great deal to transform relationships between members of the Community. In the Maastricht treaty, we look forward to decentralisation, and the House had ample opportunity to discuss that yesterday.

**Mr. Kinnock:** When Mr. George Nissen, chairman of the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation, honourably resigned yesterday, he said:

"for some years we have been telling the Government of the problems of pension and trust law."

Why did the Government take no effective action in response to those repeated warnings from the regulatory body?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not accept what the right hon. Gentleman said and, as he knows, we have made a series of announcements about how we propose to deal with the problem in the short term. We are still waiting for further information and we have made it clear that in due course further information will be released.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Is the Prime Minister suggesting that Mr. Nissen, who had no reason to mislead anyone, was seeking to mislead those listening to him yesterday and those reading his words today? Is it or is it not the case that over a period of years, and long before the Maxwell scandal, the regulatory body was giving warnings of the problems to the Government? As I am inclined to believe Mr. Nissen's word, as is everybody else, I again ask why the Government did nothing in response to those warnings from that authoritative body.

**The Prime Minister:** I do not accept the right hon. Gentleman's conclusions. When Mr. Nissen resigned on 29 June, he said:

"We have freely acknowledged that we are open to a share of reproach . . . although much of that criticism, to those who knew the facts, is misplaced. In these circumstances, I think it right that I should resign the Chairmanship."

That is what he said.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Mr. Nissen also said that, while he accepted his full share of responsibility, as the Prime Minister has indicated, no one should attach the blame solely to IMRO. He then uttered the sentence that I have quoted to the Prime Minister. As Mr. Nissen has taken his

share of responsibility and has honourably resigned, can we expect the Government to take their share of the responsibility? When can we expect Ministers to follow Mr. Nissen's example?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman, as he did last year in respect of another matter, is seeking in a truly disgraceful manner to spread blame where it does not belong—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I insist that there be order in the house so that the Prime Minister may be heard.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman may seek to smear, but he will have to wait until the information is available. As I said to the House the other day, the Securities and Investments Board will wish in due course to publish as much as possible of the IMRO review. We have made it clear that it may not be possible to publish the review in full, and we have made clear why that is so. I am advised that publication of the full review by the Securities and Investments Board or by the Government would be severely prejudicial to criminal proceedings. Would the right hon. Gentleman like us to damage criminal proceedings? Is he so concerned to make a party point that he is unconcerned with the law of the land?

**Mrs. Peacock:** My right hon. Friend will be aware of the importance to the textile industry of this country of a successful outcome to the GATT round. Can he today assure the House and the industry that during his presidency of the Council of Ministers of the European Community he will endeavour to secure a successful outcome?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that we are looking for a successful outcome that is satisfactory to all elements of British industry and will bring the GATT round to a satisfactory and early conclusion.

Q2. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Alton:** Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming the decision made by the House of Lords last week in connection with Kirklees council and the Shops Act 1950? Does not he agree that the private Member's Bill in the name of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) deserves the support of the whole House to ensure that Sunday is kept as a special day by defeating those vested interests who continue to trade illegally on Sundays?

**The Prime Minister:** I am, of course, aware of the Bill that is before the House. I think that it would be premature to take a view on any Sunday trading legislation before we know the position in Community law, which is something that we await. Before the election, we made it clear in our manifesto that once the law was clarified we would bring forward a Bill so that the House of Commons might make its decisions and put the law in a state of grace.

**Mr. Haselhurst:** In view of the critical situation over the European fighter aircraft project, can my right hon. Friend say what discussions he has had with the Italian and Spanish Governments, and whether there is still full accord between them and the British Government about the future of that vital project?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has spoken to both the Italian and the Spanish Governments about the EFA. On more than one occasion I have spoken to the German Government, and in particular to Chancellor Kohl, about it. It is possible that a decision on the European fighter aircraft will be taken by the Germans today, tomorrow or perhaps later this week. The Government and many right hon. and hon. Members have been in close touch with the German Government to try to persuade them to stay in the project. I tried again in my discussions with the Chancellor at the weekend. It is our view, on military grounds, that there is a clear and continuing need for an aircraft with the capabilities of the European fighter aircraft. If the Germans withdraw, as I believe my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence may have indicated earlier this afternoon, we shall need to discuss the future with our Spanish and Italian partners. But we await a decision.

**Mr. Stevenson:** Is the Prime Minister aware that thousands of people throughout the country are being denied access to his social fund as the result of a mistake that is admitted by the Department of Social Security? Does the Prime Minister accept that nonsense will be made of the much-vaunted citizens charter until mistakes by public authorities and bodies are acknowledged and the people who have suffered are recompensed? What action does the Prime Minister intend to take to ensure that those thousands of people are protected from mistakes made by his Government?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman makes an assertion without backing it up. If he would care to back it up, I shall examine it.

**Mr. Butterfill:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the principle of subsidiarity had been built into earlier European treaties, many of the decisions of the European Court of Justice might have been different?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, but subsidiarity exists and is legally judicable. We propose to build on it during the British presidency.

Q3. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Jones:** Is the Prime Minister aware that the chief constable of Gloucestershire recently announced a 32 per cent. increase in crime, yet when he asked for 56 extra officers a year ago, the Government allowed him only one? When will the Government allow chief constables the resources that they need to crack down on crime?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman should have the grace to recognise that no party has a monopoly of concern about crime and that no Government have provided more resources to tackle crime than the Conservative Government in recent years. He should also acknowledge that the Government have consistently ensured that the police have adequate resources. We have provided almost £5·5 billion on police services in England

and Wales, which is a rise of three quarters since 1979. Total manpower is up by 30,000—*[Interruption.]* I know that Labour Members do not like it because their record in government was lamentable. There were many reasons why we won the last election and they lost it. One of the reasons why they lost was their criminal neglect to deal with crime in their manifesto.

**Mr. John Townend:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's commitment to financial rectitude and lower taxes? If so, will he remind his colleagues that, due to the continuation of the recession, receipts from revenue are falling and they must reduce their expenditure demands this year if the Government are not to be faced with increasing taxes or the public sector deficit? As a gesture of support to the Financial Secretary, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that the £100 million additional spending as a result of the biodiversity treaty will have to come out of the existing overseas aid budget?

**The Prime Minister:** On the latter point, that is a matter for discussion in the public expenditure round when we look at all those subjects but I expect that the £100 million will, over a period, be additional to the resources currently provided in that budget. We shall look at the expenditure position as a whole. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has been holding early discussions this year with Departments on how their departmental spending programmes relate to total spending plans. As usual, this year our programme will be based on what the country needs and can afford. That is absolutely essential.

Q4. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Wray:** Does the Prime Minister realise that the police do not have enough money and resources to deal with the escalating problem of drug dealing and murder in the streets? If the Prime Minister visits cities throughout Britain he will find it commonplace that 12 and 13-year-old kids are involved in drug dealing. What plans has the Prime Minister to eradicate the problem of that evil trade?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman might have acknowledged the action that we took through the European Community at the summit last year and the domestic action that we have taken here. Clearly, he also missed my mentioning a moment ago the extra 30,000 policemen during the period of Conservative Government to deal with all problems of crime, including the important problem of drugs.

Q5. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Townsend:** While we are all greatly aware of the human tragedy and suffering in the former state of Yugoslavia and the need for humanitarian aid, is it not clear that one cannot impose peace from outside on centuries-old feuds? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the British Government will not commit infantry or armoured units to that part of the world without first having a debate and vote in the House of Commons?

**The Prime Minister:** I share many of the reservations on the difficulties of putting troops on the ground in Yugoslavia set out by my hon. Friend. Indeed, I set some of them out in answer to questions yesterday when I made a statement on the Lisbon summit. Following yesterday's meeting of the Security Council, United Nations forces are now at Sarajevo airport and it is hoped that the relief operation, at least, can get under way soon. We have offered up to four Hercules flights a day and our aircraft are ready to take off at short notice. That is a different operation from ground action which, as my hon. Friend suggests, would be extremely hazardous. At present, we do not have such action in mind.

Q6. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 30 June.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Wigley:** Is the Prime Minister aware that, whereas 90 per cent. of the housing stock in Sweden is insulated to a standard as good as or better than that required for new-build houses, the corresponding figure in Britain is only 16 per cent? Does he accept that a drive to improve insulation standards would not only reduce the demand for energy, which would be favourable for the environment, but assist people such as pensioners, the disabled and those on low incomes, and create jobs in a labour-intensive industry? Will the right hon. Gentleman consider that?

**The Prime Minister:** We have examined the broad principles of what the hon. Gentleman suggests and I have some sympathy with the points that he makes. The budget of the Energy Efficiency Office has been increased substantially this year to £59 million—a 40 per cent. increase on the previous year. A further increase in the public expenditure plans—to £75 million—is already set out in those plans for the reasons given by the hon. Gentleman.

# Points of Order

3.32 pm

**Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to seek guidance on the way in which the Government responded to the Select Committee on Social Security on the Maxwell pension scheme. Yesterday, there was a notice outside the Vote Office stating, "No papers today". In question 311 on yesterday's Order Paper, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) asked the Secretary of State when he intended to respond. In yesterday's *Hansard*, the Secretary of State replied:

"The Government's response to the Select Committee's report is published today."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 432.]

I went to the Vote Office earlier today, and was told that the report would not be made available to hon. Members until 3.30 pm.

However, journalists received unembargoed copies yesterday. That is a case of sneaking a reply out and cheating hon. Members. It is an abuse of procedures and shows that the much-vaunted style of open government has not reached the Department of Social Security. May I request a statement from the Leader of the House on how it is that a report published yesterday is not available to us but has been made available to the Lobby? What can you do, Madam Speaker, to end such obnoxious practices?

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Let me deal with the hon. Gentleman's point.

What the hon. Gentleman had to say has been heard by those Ministers who are present. I deprecate the practice of documents being made available to the press before they are made available to the House. There are senior Ministers on the Front Bench who will have heard what the hon. Gentleman said. I am sure that, as a matter of courtesy, Ministers with responsibility for such matters will report to me.

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We are told that the Community's ethos has undergone a sea change towards subsidiarity, yet daily more Community instruments are being rammed down our throats.

The Prime Minister told us today that shop hours are a matter for Community discretion. But more important than that, I understand that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given his assent to the possibility that VAT rates could be constrained by European considerations. My right hon. Friend is a good Chancellor of the Exchequer and I hope that he will hold office for a long time, but he might not. My understanding is that the House is responsible for making decisions on supply and that it should not be constrained in what taxes it raises and at what level it raises those taxes.

You, Madam Speaker, may not wish to pronounce today, but it may be advisable for Europeans to know that decisions on taxation are for the House, not for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Madam Speaker:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, points of order should relate to matters for which I am responsible, and I am not responsible for what Ministers say, whether in the House or outside.

**Several Hon. Members:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I must respond to one point of order before I can take any others.

As the hon. Gentleman understands, I will rule if necessary on whether or not tax proposals are in order as and when they are made, but I do not want to make advance pronouncements on a hypothetical situation derived from press reports. When the time is right, I shall pronounce on those matters.

**Ms. Dawn Primarolo** (Bristol, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you been notified that the Government will be making a statement to the House on the allegation that the arms embargo against Iran has been broken by the Ministry of Defence in issuing an export licence for the export of machinery which is capable of making gun barrels to a firm in my constituency? That is a matter of interest to members of the public as well as to Members of the House.

**Madam Speaker:** I have had no such notification from any member of the Government.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will know from your constituency how the primary purpose rule unfairly separates families. Has the Home Secretary, who, conveniently, is in his place, applied to you to make a statement to announce the conduct of a review which the Home Office is now conducting into the cases of spouses who have been waiting more than five years to enter Britain, particularly those with British citizen children? As that review effectively abolishes the primary purpose rule and clearly has important public policy implications, has the Home Secretary sought an opportunity to announce the review into the primary purpose review?

**Madam Speaker:** I have had no indication from the Government that they are seeking to make a statement on that matter.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): As you are aware, Madam Speaker, Members of Parliament have free access to this place—a right which you would guard with your life, I suppose. But do you have any jurisdiction over the Tory Members of Parliament who were trying to enter the other place today? Tory Whips were using intimidatory tactics to stop Tory Members going to the other place to see Baroness Thatcher being ennobled and taking part in the "Monty Python" sketch. Do you have any powers to stop those Tory Whips preventing those Euro-sceptics——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I have sufficient responsibilities in relation to the House. Please do not burden me with any more.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Am I to understand from previous exchanges that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having apparently conceded the important power of the House in raising taxes by accepting a VAT limit of no lower than 15 per cent. for four years, is not applying to you to make a statement of what amounts to a betrayal of the British people and the handing over of power to the Common Market on an unprecedented scale?

**Madam Speaker:** I have already answered a point of order on that matter. We must now move on—to summer time.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),*

That the draft Summer Time Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Tattooing (Insurance Cover)

3.41 pm

**Mrs. Teresa Gorman** (Billericay): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require that a person shall be insured against the cost of tattoo removal when purchasing the services of a commercial tattooist.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that before the election there was a considerable hue and cry about long-term waiting lists in the health service. I decided to investigate the list in my constituency, Billericay, where we have an excellent burns and plastic surgery unit. I found, to my great surprise, that a remarkably large number of the people who were waiting for two years were waiting to have tattoos removed. There were over 100 cases of that type, and they represented almost 10 per cent. of the long-term waiting list.

I have subsequently been told by my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) that his hospital, Stoke Mandeville, has a similar experience. I made inquiries in other hospitals, including the Brighton hospital, where there are specialists in this work, and they too had close on 100 people waiting to have tattoos removed. If this is added up throughout the country, one finds that a very large number of people on long-term waiting lists are there because they very much regret having been tattooed in the first place.

Mr. Patrick Hall-Smith, a specialist at the Brighton hospital, points out that taking off a tattoo can be almost as traumatic as having it put on. It causes great psychological distress and, in addition to the cost, can cause a long-term problem for the individual concerned.

You will be surprised to learn, Madam Speaker, that it would cost you £25 to have "I love Teresa" tattooed on your arm; but it will surprise you even more to learn that it would cost £2,500 to have that tattoo removed under the health service. That is money which could be better spent on people who are ill, and surely that is what the health service is for. I am therefore calling for people who choose to have themselves tattooed to have first to think carefully about it and to take out an insurance policy.

Tattooing is of course extremely common in the Navy. It is quite common for a jolly sailor to roll out of the Crown and Anchor with a girl on his arm, stagger across to the tattooist and, because he does not have to sign anything, have "Sharon" tattooed on his chest before he realises what he is doing. But he may wake up in the morning to find that in fact it is Tracey he loves. He is now burdened with something that he wishes to goodness he had never had done. I am told that such sailors, when they leave the Navy, are often discriminated against when they are looking for jobs, particularly if their tattoos are in a place where they can easily be seen. This is especially so when they are on the face, where, I am given to understand, many people have tattoos.

The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992 made it necessary for tattooists to register, although apparently very few of them do so. It also made it necessary for people to be over the age of 18 before they could be tattooed. However, the journal of the British Medical Association records that the majority of tattoos are carried out on people under the age of 18, and often as young as 13.

The removal of these tattoos requires the use of acid, burning, abrasion, lasers or even skin grafts, and can take

*[Mrs. Teresa Gorman]*

place over a long period—so long, indeed, that the individual often gives up, having wasted the valuable time of a plastic surgeon who could be doing something a lot more useful. Furthermore, the treatment leaves the skin looking like a patchwork quilt. There is no such thing as invisible mending when it comes to the removal of tattoos.

Tattooing has currently become very fashionable. Many prominent people in the pop world are displaying tattoos. There is a young lady called Paula Yates who apparently has a tattoo which she regularly exhibits on television. I think that it is on her arm. Surprisingly enough, Eddie Grundy of "The Archers" was recently tattooed, and he is busy persuading the young people of Ambridge to follow his example. I hate to think what the plastic surgery bills will be in Ambridge in the near future.

Whole magazines are devoted to the apparently fashionable art of tattooing, but no one tells the people who undergo what is in a way enforced defilement of their skin what it will cost in pain, suffering, misery and lost jobs if they change their minds.

My Bill does not seek to prohibit people being tattooed. I would be the last one to stop them. I am on record as saying that everyone should be allowed to go to hell in their own way—I just do not think that we ought to pay for the journey.

My Bill would ensure that, before people are tattooed, they would obtain insurance, and would give their consent in writing, to absolve the tattooist of any responsibility. It is wholly wrong that the health service should be derided for keeping people waiting a long time for treatment, when many of those concerned are in need not of a genuine operation but only of cosmetic surgery.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Mr. Christopher Gill, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Gyles Brandreth, Mr. Eric Pickles, Dr. Robert Spink, Mr. Terry Dicks, Dr. Liam Fox, and Mr. David Lidington.

### Tattooing (Insurance Cover)

Mrs. Teresa Gorman accordingly presented a Bill to require that a person shall be insured against the cost of tattoo removal when purchasing the services of a commercial tattooist; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 July and to be printed. [Bill 49.]

# Orders of the Day

## Boundary Commissions Bill

*As amended, considered; reported, with amendments.*

3.47 pm

**The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am extremely pleased that this legislation has made its way to this stage in the parliamentary process comparatively quietly. It is a tribute to our parliamentary democracy that it has aroused relatively little controversy, and that only a small number of right hon. and hon. Members voted against its Second Reading.

The majority of right hon. and hon. Members are committed to our system of single-member constituencies as a fair way of producing a representative assembly to support the Government of the country. If we defend that system—as the majority of us do—it is important regularly to revise the numbers in each constituency to take account of demographic change, and to ensure as far as practicable rough equality between constituencies.

Our system is well trusted and impartial. The boundary commission process is fairly lengthy, and allows for considerable debate and local public consultation. It is necessary that the commissioners undertake a thorough review at rather more frequent intervals these days, because the population moves about so much across the country.

A problem exists because we have reached the stage where one person's vote is worth almost twice that of another person in England alone, because constituencies have drifted apart in size. Previous boundary commission reviews were probably too infrequent—as long apart as every 15 years—for today's demographic changes. It is therefore necessary to ensure that we keep to a sensible timetable. The present review should be completed by 31 December 1994, and thereafter we will move to an eight to 12-year cycle.

Although about 40 hon. Members were prepared to vote against the Bill on Second Reading, Members on both Front Benches were in agreement. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) for welcoming the Bill. He said that it was important to put it on the statute book to ensure that the review is completed within a reasonable time, so that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House can contest at the next general election constituencies which have had time to settle down, and in which loyalties have become established.

I am sure that all the party organisations will want to know the boundaries a reasonable time before the next election, so that they can establish the various bodies and candidates.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): I voted against the Bill on Second Reading. Derbyshire is in the first tranche of counties to be examined in an investigation relating to the parallel question of the local government boundaries. The three north Derbyshire seats—Bolsover, Chesterfield and Derbyshire, North-East—all conform to the normal electoral pattern, with between 65,000 and 68,000 electors. May we have a guarantee that, irrespective of what

happens in regard to the local government boundary commission and anything that may happen to Derbyshire, the parliamentary boundary commission will not interfere with constituencies of that kind, which were revised in 1983? Any changes in constituencies that fitted the bill perfectly in 1983, and have not altered dramatically since then, would constitute an act of political involvement and an attempt to rig the position for the Tory party.

**Mr. Clarke:** One of the great strengths of the system is the fact that the Home Secretary of the day cannot direct the boundary commissioners to reach any conclusions about any constituencies. The rules in schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 determine the way in which the commissioners proceed, but ultimately their independent, objective judgment will decide where the boundaries lie, in Derbyshire and elsewhere. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), has made his point about the Derbyshire constituencies. As it happens, I represent a constituency with little more than 70,000 voters, which is coterminous with the borough council. No doubt, if any proposals are made to change his constituency, the hon. Gentleman will do the same as I would, and argue his case before the boundary commissioners and at the public inquiry.

I have no reason to believe that the local government boundary commission, which has not even reached Derbyshire yet—Derbyshire is merely at an early point in its timetable—has any views about local government boundaries in the county, and I certainly do not believe that the parliamentary boundary commissioners will alter constituencies needlessly. Changes should arise only when it is necessary to make constituencies conform as closely as possible to the national quota, and to ensure that there are no major discrepancies between neighbouring constituencies.

The key point is that I cannot influence boundaries in Derbyshire or anywhere else; nor should I be able to do so. The boundary commissioners must be independent, and I think that it is generally accepted on both sides of the House that they are.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): Why are the two reviews not to be kept entirely separate, so that one review cannot possibly have an impact on the other? The Department of the Environment's guidance notes about the local government review state that the parliamentary boundary commission must be one of the bodies that engage in consultation. If it engages in consultation in connection with one review, it must also do so in connection with the other, and the two reviews will become intimately linked as a result.

That will affect Derbyshire, which is in the first tranche of counties to be dealt with in the local government review but not in the first tranche to be dealt with in the parliamentary review. The connection should be kept out of the picture, because it is open to manipulation under the terms of reference set out for the commissioners.

**Mr. Clarke:** The two processes are essentially separate, except in one respect. The parliamentary boundary commissioners have always been enjoined to have regard to local government boundaries when making their recommendations, and as far as I am aware that has never been seriously challenged. The parliamentary boundary commissioners—particularly in shire counties of the kind that we are discussing—do not cross county boundaries except under carefully prescribed rules.

All of us who have spoken so far have constituencies in the east midlands. I do not recall anyone seriously suggesting the creation of constituencies that cross the boundaries between Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire. When the Local Government Commission has been set up—it is not my responsibility but that of the Secretary of State for the Environment—it will seek the best organisation of local government, will consider the possibility of unitary authorities and will clearly have regard to local loyalties and the effective delivery of local services. It will impinge on the parliamentary boundary commissioners only if it starts altering county boundaries.

Although parliamentary boundary commissioners are not enjoined to do so, in our experience they have tended to try to get the constituencies to coincide with the local borough or district boundaries where that is convenient. My constituency in Nottinghamshire is the only one where it is not convenient. Other than that, I am not aware of any overlap between the two.

The Bill covers the overlap only because, if the parliamentary boundary commissioners were enjoined to avoid crossing local authority boundaries, the problem would arise of which local boundaries they should have regard to, when we are in the process of local government reform in Wales and England and, under a slightly later timetable, no doubt in Scotland. Clause 3 clarifies the position by providing a cut-off date—before that date local authority boundaries will be taken into account, and after that date, usually they will not.

We have tried to maintain reasonable bipartisanship and have tried to make the Bill straightforward, so as to clarify the timetable. In so doing, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), and I have listened carefully to some of the arguments about the drafting of clause 3, and have amended it in response to the points made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling). I think that everyone is now happy with it.

In our previous debate, there were many exchanges about Mr. Banham and the local government boundary commission. Strictly speaking, they are irrelevant to the Bill. We are dealing with the parliamentary boundary commission, and local government reorganisation is relevant only where local government boundaries have been changed and have a bearing on the parliamentary work as described in clause 3.

**Mr. John Maxton** (Glasgow, Cathcart): May I raise the question of Scotland with the right hon. and learned Gentleman? Of course the Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the local government boundary commission and the boundary commission for Scotland. I am disappointed, to say the least, that a member of the Scottish ministerial team is not present. At the moment, a local government boundary commission is operating in Scotland, drawing up new boundaries for the existing local government structure, but in September we shall have a White Paper on the total reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

In Committee, the Minister of State implied that there was a fair chance that the 1994 regional elections would be cancelled, so that local boundary commission is operating

*[Mr. John Maxton]*

to no good purpose although the boundary commission may take into account any recommendations that it makes about boundaries for local government seats.

**Mr. Clarke:** The hon. Gentleman is trying to draw me on issues which he knows perfectly well should be dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. Whether my right hon. Friend is about to publish a White Paper on further local government reform, when he will do so and what it might contain are matters on which I cannot be drawn and of which my knowledge is very slight. Ministers from the Scottish Office have at times been present during our debates, usually listening to English exchanges, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of my hon. and right hon. Friends in the Scottish Office. The position in Scotland is the same as that in England. The parliamentary boundary commissioners will have regard to any changes in local government boundaries which come into effect by the cut-off date described in clause 3.

One particular problem with local boundaries caused much debate in Committee. There was considerable concern about London boroughs and whether the parliamentary boundary commissioners should be enjoined to cross them. A perceived difficulty arose out of rule 4(1)(a)(ii) in schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986:

"no London borough or any part of a London borough shall be included in a constituency which includes the whole or part of any other London borough".

A number of hon. Members. including my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones), my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) and the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), were concerned that, if the boundary commissioners adhered rigidly to borough boundaries in London and allocated seats between boroughs on the principles sketched out, we were likely to have new constituency boundaries in London which would give rise to great discrepancies in size between one constituency and another. Other hon. Members also thought that, in London, it would make more sense to cross borough boundaries in some circumstances to achieve constituencies of a more equal size.

The case was made cogently in Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, when he wound up, undertook that we would look at the matter. I assure the House that my hon. Friend and I have given considerable personal attention to the question whether the rule in schedule 2 should be deleted from the Bill. We have decided that it should not be, although we had considerable sympathy with the case put to us. One can draw up good examples of neighbouring London boroughs in which a strict adherence to borough boundaries will give rise to considerable discrepancies in size. However, I point out to those who raised the point and who wonder why the Bill is unamended on that point on Third Reading that it is our considered opinion that rule 5 in schedule 2 gives the boundary commission sufficient flexibility to behave in the way that is being urged on it by hon. Members if it judges it fit.

I have read out the strict terms of rule 4(1)(a)(ii) in schedule 2, which appears to give rise to difficulty about not crossing London borough boundaries. However, the rule is qualified clearly by rule 5 of schedule 2. Rule 5 makes it clear that

"a Boundary Commission may depart from the strict application of rule 4 if it appears to them that a departure is desirable to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of any constituency and the electoral quota, or between the electorate of any constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies in the part of the United Kingdom with which they are concerned."

We are satisfied that the boundary commission, which will have regard to that rule, can, if it judges fit, use that rule to justify crossing borough boundaries, which it declined to do when it adjusted the London boundaries on the previous occasion.

Rule 5 gives two bases on which it is perfectly proper for the boundary commission to depart from a strict adherence to the boundaries. The first basis is when it is necessary or desirable to avoid a disparity between the electorate of a constituency and the national quota. That is less likely to arise in the London area. More importantly and relevantly in parts of London, borough boundaries may be crossed if it is desirable to avoid an excessive disparity between the electorate of any constituency and that of neighbouring constituencies. I am sure that the boundary commissioners will have regard to what was said in debates in the House. They have all the powers that they require.

As I said to the hon. Member for Bolsover a moment ago, it is extremely important that, in the end, the boundary commissioners themselves must decide whether it is desirable to cross borough boundaries. I have no doubt that they will do so if they judge it necessary to get a fair and proper result in London.

The Bill in its present form, which I ask the House to give a Third reading, is essentially similar to the Bill that was introduced earlier. I described it then as a straightforward measure which would make no change to the rules for the boundary commission's operations and which would confirm the timetable to which most hon. Members expected the boundary commission to adhere in any event. I said that it would help to ensure that the timetable was achieved by making arrangements for some modest extra resources to be provided and for the commissioners to be paid for their public work. We all hope that the commission will finish its work in good time to enable us to fight the next general election, whenever it comes, on sensible boundaries for which everyone is prepared.

I do not know whether there will be a repeat today on Third Reading of the modest vote against the Bill that occurred on Second Reading. I continue to fail to see why anyone should sensibly want to repeat that vote. When the Bill was first published, some Labour Members denounced it as gerrymandering. However, it seemed at the time, and it has become clear since, that they did that without studying the process upon which we were going to engage.

The only reason to vote against Third Reading would be to try to ensure some delay in boundary changes, with the result that the next election would be fought on geographical distributions that are more than 20 years old. I hope that no one will again try to take the high moral ground and argue that it is desirable to fight an election on population distributions of 1976.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook encountered some criticism. Mutterings in the corridors have reached my ears about the fact that the Opposition did not divide

on Second Reading against this Bill, which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook quite rightly recognised to be a sensible measure. If there is a Division against Third Reading, that can occur only because someone has decided to vote against the Bill for the sake of it. However, for the benefit of our parliamentary democracy, I trust that there will be an uncontroversial, straightforward end to our proceedings.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): I was one of those who advocated for voting against Second Reading, and I did so. I want to make it abundantly clear that I did so because the Government introduced the Bill without any consultation with other political parties. They introduced it in a spirit of partisanship, and they have substantively changed the law in respect of Scotland. Although the schedule to the Act that the Secretary of State cited makes it clear that the boundary commission in Scotland is required to have regard to local government boundaries, as a result of the Government's gerrymandering objectives, the boundary commission for Scotland will not be able to follow current local government boundaries. Those were very good reasons for voting against Second Reading.

**Mr. Clarke:** I am glad that we have heard that last-minute explanation of what the vote was supposed to be about. However, I am not convinced by it.

As I have already explained, the Bill does not change the rules. The Scottish boundary commission will follow current Scottish local government boundaries unless new ones have come into effect by the cut-off date. Having listened to the Second Reading debate and the Committee stage, which was taken on the Floor of the House, I have yet to hear any substantive objections to the terms of the Bill from the Liberal Democrat Benches. I believe that the underlying point is accepted by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland advocated a quite different method of electing Parliaments. He believes in proportional representation. He does not support the single-constituency method of electing Parliaments. If I were to attribute to him the kind of unworthy motives that he somewhat lightheartedly attributes to us, I could say that it was in his interests to reduce the single-constituency method to the ridiculous and to have people represented in thoroughly disproportionate constituencies to provide him with an extra argument for moving to another method.

However, those of us who believe in the single-constituency method know that it has always required periodic, objective review to ensure that the constituencies remain roughly of the same size. That is what the Bill does, and I commend it to the House.

4.8 pm

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): I get the impression that the Secretary of State would like a vote at the end of the debate. The fact that the Bill's principle at any rate is not controversial seems to be a matter of regret for the Secretary of State. It does not suit his temperament to have to introduce a measure or see its progress completed when its principle at least is not a matter of major controversy.

The principle that we need a review is beyond question. The present boundaries are drawn up on electorates that may have been correct 20 years ago, and there is no doubt that the population has moved since then. However, we are entitled and quite right to raise questions that arise from the Bill and, in particular, to refer to the interrelationship between local government boundary structure and local government boundary reviews and the work of the parliamentary boundary commission. Those two issues are related.

The impartiality of the boundary commission is not in question. However, we are entitled to question the rules and regulations which the House, and in particular the Government, lay down. The parliamentary boundary commission is rather like a train. If one lays the tracks to lead to an eventual destination, one can hardly be surprised if the train eventually arrives there. The same principle applies to boundaries.

In the main, the local authorities are the building blocks for the parliamentary boundary commission. Therefore, in directing or attempting to influence the boundary commission, it is important for the Government to ensure that the local authority structure and the building blocks are as they would like. For that reason, we raised several issues in Committee and divided the Committee on them. We were worried about the way in which the Government proposed to operate, particularly with regard to the local government review in England, Scotland and Wales.

I am happy to vote against measures if the principle is at stake, but it is important to vote against the right measures and not the wrong ones. As I said, the principle of the Bill is that we need to review the boundaries because there have been population shifts. That is beyond doubt. So we do not object to the principle.

However, while I accept that the 1976 electorate is no basis on which to conduct a general election in 1995 or 1996, I reiterate the point that we made in Committee. There is great anxiety that the 1991 registers in England and Wales and the 1992 registers in Scotland are inaccurate. There are grounds for suspecting that in some cases the registers are grossly inaccurate. In England alone, it is expected that more than 1·5 million people are not on the register.

I repeat that it is important that the boundary commission should have regard to established under-registration. If it does not, the recommendations that it makes in 1994 will be based on electorates that are inaccurate. We shall have exactly the same problem in 1994 and subsequent years that we readily accept that we have now—constituencies are based on electorates that have changed since they were originally drawn up.

As the Home Secretary said, anxiety was expressed on Second Reading about the wide scope of clause 3, which allows the parliamentary boundary commissions to take account of local government boundaries and structure. We tabled amendments on that point, and I am glad that the Government accepted the spirit of them. We in turn did not oppose the amendment which made it clear that the parliamentary boundary commissions could have regard only to boundaries that were enshrined in an Act or other measure. That amendment ensured that the commission could be sure that Parliament had approved the boundary changes.

However, in Wales there is a curious arrangement whereby the parliamentary boundary commission is entitled to consider boundaries approved only on Second Reading. In other words, changes could take place in Committee or on Report. That is not inconceivable in

*[Mr. Alistair Darling]*

matters of local government structure. Changes could be introduced by all-party agreement. Conservative Back Benchers might press changes on the Government. It would be unfortunate if the Welsh parliamentary boundary commission introduced proposals based on boundaries proposed on Second Reading which might change. It would be regrettable if we allowed that to happen.

In any event, it is a bad precedent to invite bodies which are not part of the structures of the House of Commons to have regard to a preliminary discussion. Second Reading debates are merely preliminary discussions. It would be far better to require the boundary commission to have regard to something which is on the statute book.

Notwithstanding the changes made to clause 3, problems may arise. The Home Secretary said that it was a matter of clarification, yet in London we still do not know the scale of the changes that the Government have in mind. The Local Government Act 1992 makes it clear that the review body must consider the boundaries of local government in London. Of course, the structures and boundaries that will eventually be decided by the local government boundary commission are interrelated.

If the Government asked the local government boundary commission as early as this year to examine the structure of local government in London, they must be contemplating changes which may not be major but could be significant to parliamentary boundaries. I note that a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham North-West (Mr. Banks) in column 368 of yesterday's *Hansard* gave the impression that the Government contemplate such changes.

It is now common ground between the parties that the boundary commission should cross London borough boundaries where necessary. Where small local authority constituencies coincide with parliamentary constituencies such as that of Surbiton, which has an electorate of 42,000, it is clearly right for the commission to exercise its discretion.

I accept that this is not the Bill in which to change the rules in the 1986 Act—the consolidating Act. I had hoped that the Secretary of State might say something about the Government's intentions as regards those rules. Again, it is common ground that the rules are in need of revision. The Home Secretary has said that the boundary commission will have discretion, within the existing rules, to consider boundaries in London. If we accept that the rules need changing, it seems odd that we do not simply change them and remove that preliminary injunction from the boundary commission.

The problems will remain in England, where there is a creeping system of review and change. By the qualifying date of 1 June 1994, it is likely that the first tranche of changes in England will have been discussed and will be on the statute book. When we consider the apparently haphazard selection in the first tranche to be reviewed by Sir John Banham's commission, it is no surprise to find included several counties which are sensitive as regards parliamentary boundaries. We shall be interested to find out whether the Government seek to influence the Banham inquiry—either through the representations made, or in any other way—and thus indirectly the parliamentary boundary commission, to make certain recommendations about boundary changes.

If I am wrong and that is not the intention of clause 3, I wait with interest to discover the real intention. It seems clear that the Government hope to use the opportunity to influence the boundary commission, which has to depend on the local authority building blocks to do its work.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) said, the position is different in Scotland. A commission is set up to consider appropriate parts of England and to hear representations about what people want. In Scotland, there is no similar provision—the Government will decide what is best. They will certainly consult, but having consulted—if the way that they have behaved in Scotland in the past 12 years is anything to go by—they will decide what is best. I suspect that they will decide what is best for Government and for the Conservative cause.

The Home Secretary fairly said that he did not know what was going on in Scotland and could not let us know what the Secretary of State for Scotland had in mind, but we have some clues. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), has been touring Scotland, encouraging any district, parish or group to make proposals. From what we know about the Under-Secretary of State, his approach to politics and the way in which he has conducted himself, it is clear that he is trying to create Tory enclaves wherever he can. The Tories face an uphill battle in Scotland to make any recovery. They will lose no opportunity to make that recovery, and overlook nothing in their cause.

I am sure that the Scottish Office intends to use the review of local authority structure to try to create units of local government that can conveniently be presented to the parliamentary boundary commission as units which ought to be taken into consideration during the review of constituencies. In Scotland, local authority boundaries are also the building blocks on which the parliamentary boundary commission will have to rely. For example, if the local authority review suggests single-tier authorities, which are small enough to be constituencies in Scotland, it will invite the parliamentary boundary commission to have regard to those.

While the impartiality of the Scottish boundary commission is beyond reproach, one cannot say the same of the Government's review of local authority structure in Scotland, which is entirely partial. Nothing that we have seen from the Government leaves us in any doubt that the Conservative party in Scotland will take the opportunity to influence the parliamentary boundary commission if it has a chance to do so.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): The hon. Gentleman keeps saying that the building blocks of parliamentary constituencies are local authorities. That is not the case, except in so far as the envelope is concerned within which the number of constituencies is calculated —for example, the counties in England and the regions of Scotland. At a lower level, the building blocks are wards and not local authorities. It is conceivable that, as is the case throughout England, Scottish parliamentary constituencies might have wards drawn from one, two, three or even more local authorities.

**Mr. Darling:** That happens quite often in England, particularly in urban areas, but in Scotland the constituencies have traditionally been more neatly contained within the regions because of our geography.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) is right to say that the wards are the building blocks. At the moment, the parliamentary constituency of East Lothian corresponds with East Lothian district council, which is convenient for all concerned. However, if the Government suggested a local authority block of Berwick and East Lothian, it is not inconceivable that the boundary commission for Scotland might think that that would be a convenient parliamentary constituency. Lest there be any doubt, I am confident that the Labour party would hold that constituency as well, as it did so often when it existed previously.

That example, however, gives a clue to the way in which the Government think that they can consider creating local authority units that would be convenient for the parliamentary commission to consider. Under clause 3, as amended, the parliamentary commission would be entitled to consider such new local authority structures, provided they are on the statute book by 1 June 1994. I know that the Secretary of State does not know the timetable for Scotland, but it is clear to those of us who represent seats north of the border that the Government could meet that deadline of 1 June.

I am simply canvassing before the House the fact that the Conservative party may be tempted to try to create a local authority structure that would best suit its parliamentary boundary aspirations. I do not believe that that is the proper way in which to construct such a structure in Scotland. We should create local authorities that are designed to provide services and which will last for between 20 and 30 years, not simply a local authority structure designed to meet a need in two years' time, in June 1994.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman said that there was a coincidence between the local authority and constituency of East Lothian, but he asked what would happen if one had a local authority unit that consisted of that constituency and Berwick. The answer is that that local authority would be well above the quota for Scotland; and that therefore the parliamentary boundary commission would presumably have to subtract some of the wards from one end or other of that constituency to make up the numbers in another parliamentary constituency.

The hon. Gentleman has constantly mentioned the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Perhaps the most relevant example that I can cite is my hon. Friend's constituency of Eastwood, which consists of not only the district of Eastwood, but some of the wards from the district of Renfrew. That illustrates my precise point: that the building blocks are local authority wards, not local authorities.

**Mr. Darling:** I had forgotten that the hon. Gentleman has a close affection for the Under-Secretary—I believe that they went to the same university and that they share a similar philosophy.

I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about Eastwood. I am not suggesting for a moment that the boundary commission will not use its discretion. However, the Government will not pass by this opportunity, particularly in Scotland, to create local authority units that the parliamentary boundary commission could consider if they were in place by 1 June 1994. I accept that subtractions and additions can be made, and it would be daft to suggest that the creation of such new authorities is the sole reason for the local authority review.

Equally, people would be naive to believe that the Government are totally oblivious of the consequences of that review. We are all aware that, when parliamentary boundary commissioners conduct their inquiries and write their reports, they must have some regard for their likely consequence. Those people do not come from Mars, and it is not a matter of complete surprise when their proposals contain certain conclusions.

It is important to repeat that, when considering the local authority structure in Scotland, England and Wales, the primary job of the Government is to establish councils to provide services efficiently and responsibly. Those local authority structures should remain in place for between 20 and 30 years, and should not simply be designed for an entirely different purpose.

We are, by amending the 1986 Act, asking the commission to do a great deal, and I hope that it will bear in mind the need for local inquiries to enable people to have the maximum opportunity to consider the commission's recommendations. Although the Government want the commission to have regard to the boundaries in place by June 1994, the commission should bear in mind the need to produce a coherent report that will stand up to examination.

The Secretary of State referred to the need to change the 1986 Act and, in particular, to examine the rules. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) made the valid point that, if the Government intend to change the parent Act governing the legislation on parliamentary boundaries, there should be cross-party discussions, involving all the parties in the House. I had hoped that the Secretary of State would give that commitment today.

If changes are to be made, they must be above party politics and be seen to be fair and widely accepted. It is not good enough for a Government simply to drive through changes that they think may be beneficial to themselves. I hope that, at some point, the Secretary of State will say that, if there are to be further changes, discussions will take place among the parties in the House.

My hon. Friends and I do not oppose the principle of the Bill, and we shall watch with interest to see how the practice works. On that basis, we shall not oppose its Third Reading.

4.26 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): I welcome the fact that the Bill has reached its Third Reading so smoothly, and I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) say that the Labour party would not oppose its principle.

I do not know whether he can take along with him the representative of the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who said on Second Reading—which was, after all, the vote of principle—that he had to vote against the Bill. I see that he is not noticeably supported today by the swelling ranks on

*[Mr. John Bowis]*

the Bench alongside him. We look forward to hearing from him shortly the present position of the Liberal party on the issue.

I welcome the Bill. I have no personal axe to grind because, so far as I am aware, it is likely that my constituency will remain largely unmoved by the boundary commission's proposals. I can therefore speak with some independence in welcoming the exercise as a whole.

We should at the outset welcome, as has been repeated across the Chamber, the independence of the boundary commission. That should be stressed so that the general public may be assured that what is being proposed is independent and not partisan or party-orientated.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Was my hon. Friend present at earlier stages of the Bill when the hon. Members for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), in a disgraceful attack on the integrity of the parliamentary boundary commission, called it corrupt? That view has now been repudiated from the Opposition Front Bench, which presumably accounts for the absence, in disgrace, of those two hon. Members today.

**Mr. Bowis:** We have certainly noticed the absence from the Chamber of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). One can hardly fail to notice his absence, since one notices so much his presence, especially when he is participating. I note my hon. Friends remarks and agree that the repudiation to which he refers represents a welcome change.

The whole purpose of the Bill is to ensure that the parliamentary democratic system is fair, and it can be fair only if the allocation of seats to votes is, roughly speaking, fairly consistent across the country. I hope that, in due course, it will be across the United Kingdom as a whole, with no difference between the different parts of it. Perhaps one day we shall even find a solution to the Isle of Wight, although perhaps the population of that island will provide the solution.

The size of a constituency and the number of votes needed to elect a Member of Parliament are of paramount importance and should constantly be corrected. That is why the Bill is important. It was suggested that we might consider the way in which some Members represent more constituents than others. I recall the hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggesting that, while he had fewer constituents to represent, he had more work to do because they were from an inner city. I, too, represent an inner city, with at least 50 per cent. more electors to represent than he. If there is to be disparity, perhaps it should be in favour of the Member who represents more electors, with one's pay or expenses reflecting that fact. It is impossible to obtain absolute parity of representation.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central mentioned the question of registration. We need to be very careful about bringing that question into this debate at all. There are many reasons for people not being registered. In the case of Hackney, which is constantly being cited, it is quite clear that past registration irregularities were being corrected by the electoral officer. He went back to the system of registering only people who had filled in a form and applied to be registered, instead of taking it for granted that people who had not applied for years should automatically be re-registered. Quite clearly that is a question of registration, which should not be taken into account in this process.

**Mr. Barnes:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that we may talk about more than one principle? The principle of equal electoral districts is very important, as is the principle that everybody who can be placed on an electoral register should be so placed. When those two principles come into conflict, we have a problem.

**Mr. Bowis:** Everybody who is entitled to register should be enabled to do so. If anyone chooses not to do so it is not for us to question or enforce.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) talked about the number of foreign residents —in the case of his constituency, refugees—who are represented by Members of Parliament. That too is a dangerous road to go down. At present, many refugees from Somalia are coming into my constituency. There are also many Italian and French residents in the constituency, and I often wish that they could vote, as I have no doubt that they would swell Conservative support in Battersea. Although they cannot vote, I represent them as best I can. In any case, registration should not be a matter for this measure.

The Bill is urgent, as the process should be completed in good time for the next general election. That is not because of any changes that may arise. In some parts of the country, there may be increased representation for the Labour party, and in others increased representation for the Conservatives. It is important that the process be completed well before the beginning of the next election campaign, so that candidates may know what areas they are seeking to represent. It is only fair to individual Members. From experience, we know that, because of the disappearance of a seat, members of the same party will have to compete against each other. That will apply to both Labour and Conservative candidates for selection. Losers should have time to look elsewhere.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is rather bizarre that, whereas it was four days before the last election that the Leader of the Opposition realised that he was going to lose, Opposition Members are starting to make excuses four and a half years in advance of losing the next election?

**Mr. Bowis:** I find nothing bizarre about the Opposition, but my hon. Friend makes an excellent point, which I have no doubt will be borne out when the next election takes place on the basis of the new constituencies.

It is important that the changes be put in place as quickly as possible. This is a rolling programme. As we go from one election to the next, we are going from one boundary commission to the next. The next commission exercise will deal with the boundaries of the European constituencies. We must get the building blocks of the parliamentary constituency boundaries right.

I want to make two brief points about London. First, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will make sure that the edges of constituencies take open spaces into account. I realise that this has probably more to do with local government boundaries than with parliamentary boundaries, but there is a relationship. For instance, Clapham common is a finger of Lambeth that comes into my constituency. There have recently been national music

days there—great celebrations at which I was pleased to be present. However, we have sometimes had events like the Sunsplash concert, which was not as welcome to my constituents, who had no say in the affair through their local or national representatives. It is important that open spaces on the boundaries of constituencies are carefully considered.

I take on board the points made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and the Opposition spokesman about crossing London's boundaries. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will look again and again at that because we are concerned about getting it right. We must be able to cross London borough boundaries in this exercise. He rightly pointed out that clause 5 provides for discretion in the event of disparity but said that, last time, that discretion was not used. The disparity may have grown, in which case I hope that the boundary commission will have noticed that and will use the discretion this time.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that he hoped that the boundary commission would read our proceeding avidly and take that matter on board. I have slightly less confidence in its reading matter, and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will draw to its attention the fact that the House wants them not only to note that possibility but to use it in London, so that we have as fair a system in London as in the rest of the country.

With that proviso, I welcome the Bill's Third Reading, and look forward to the measure being on the statute book soon.

4.36 pm

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East): No one can oppose the principle that we should have equal electoral districts. In Committee, I pointed out that it was one of the chartists' principles and the Secretary of State said that, in that sense, we were all chartists now, because we wanted equal electoral districts.

However, simply because a Bill is attached to a principle, it cannot be allowed to waft through. A Bill is not a principle but a detail of the measure that it seeks to pursue. This Bill has two manifest defects which should be corrected before we can advance the much needed principle of equal electoral districts.

The first defect is that there is serious under-registration on the electoral register. It would not matter if it were spread throughout the country evenly, because the quotas would then simply be smaller than they should have been, and the seats would be drawn in much the same way. However, there is a serious maldistribution, which I described on Second reading and in Committee, which shows that the register is in a bad state.

We should not use the current electoral register to work out quotas or determine boundaries in shire areas. If we cannot put the electoral register right, as would be desirable, we are dealing with another principle: the important operation of democracy. Everyone should be placed on an electoral register, and everyone should have a say in an election. If we cannot put that right because of logistical problems, timing, or a need to progress towards equal electoral districts, are there not other steps that we can take to achieve better representation and more equal districts?

We have figures for the estimated population eligible to vote. Are not those figures adequate? They are based on the 1981 census and have been adjusted since then to take account of births and deaths——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but he will know that the Bill's scope is very narrow. He now seems to be dealing broadly with other basic issues that do not appertain to the Bill.

**Mr. Barnes:** My argument is that we should not accept the Bill, because it is based on defective electoral registration provisions for determining quotas and drawing up boundaries. Surely, I should be allowed to explain the defects in the electoral register and how, even so, there may be a way out of the difficulties by accepting the relevant estimated population figures. It is a matter of whether those figures, the 1981 census and subsequent adjustments are good enough. It is possible that those figures are more accurate than the electoral register.

There is a problem with the 1991 census, because, despite Government efforts to introduce legislation on census confidentiality, it is generally accepted that 1 million people are missing from the register. That is mainly due to the poll tax, which has had a serious impact on electoral registration. Such problems should be corrected. The manifest defect of the Bill is inadequacy of the electoral registration figures being used. There may be other figures that we could use to correct that defect.

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is familiar with Plymouth, but, curiously enough, the number of names on the 1991 electoral register has been found to be between 10,000 to 15,000 less than that of the names on the community charge register. That statistic changes the argument again, and I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has considered that aspect in relation to the Bill.

**Mr. Barnes:** Clearly, the 10,000 to 15,000 extra people on the poll tax register should be transferred to the electoral register and added to the figures under discussion. We need the full figures of electoral registration. I was on the Committee that dealt with the poll tax legislation, when Opposition Members tabled an amendment to do just that. The amendment would have automatically transferred those on the poll tax register to the electoral register, so the transfer was no longer merely a possibility.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I must restrain the hon. Gentleman. On Third Reading, he must restrict himself to the Bill's contents.

**Mr. Barnes:** The Bill's second manifest defect is the interconnection between the local government boundary review and the parliamentary boundary review. The Bill affects a district such as Derbyshire, which is in the first tranche of local government boundary investigations. The timing of the new changes means that Derbyshire has wobbly boundaries; it does not have precise existing boundaries within which the parliamentary boundary commission may operate and determine the correct number of seats. The current quota of seats is 10·46, so there is a problem as to whether there should be 10 or 11 seats. If some of the points raised earlier are relevant, perhaps the district should have 11 seats.

*[Mr. Barnes]*

When a local government boundary review is being conducted while a parliamentary boundary review is also on the cards, districts are likely to be adjusted for parliamentary purposes, to develop local government structures, not merely to fit parliamentary boundaries into shire regions. I do not know of any former legislation that has passed through the House in which boundary reviews or parliamentary affairs have been allowed to interfere with local government boundary reviews.

Department of the Environment guidelines state that among those who must be consulted by the local government boundary review are the parliamentary boundary commissioners. Those factors must be taken into account. The problem is not those who are carrying out the review or the commissioners' work but the imprecise nature of the parameters set down. We should act on existing local government boundary structures and fit the districts into them. The next review should take account of subsequent local government changes. Unless those factors are dealt with, and unless the Minister states on Third Reading that the defects will be corrected in another place, we have no alternative but to vote against the Bill.

One of my proudest achievements in the House is to have drawn attention to the defects in the extension of the expatriate vote from five to 20 years, and my insistence on speaking and voting against the measure at every opportunity, despite the line taken by the Opposition Front Bench team.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): I did, too.

**Mr. Barnes:** Yes, my hon. Friend also did so.

I intend to act in the same way today, as I believe that there is a fundamental problem in the democratic system. If we decide that the principle is enough and it does not matter about the detailed practicalities of implementation, I hope that, on 12 February, the Government will adopt the same attitude towards my Bill on electoral registration, as that cannot be challenged in principle.

4.46 pm

**Mr. Peter Brooke** (City of London and Westminster, South): The number of local authorities affecting my constituency means that it is 25th out of a list of 32 London local authorities in terms of the ratio of Members to electors, so I hope that I am not governed by self-interest. However, there are matters relating to my constituency that are worth sharing.

Some 3 per cent. of the working population of this country work in my constituency. My 650 colleagues in the House are good enough to look after the other 97 per cent. of them, which creates a daytime population in my constituency of 20 times the national average. I make no complaint about that; the workers' employers must have access to me as their Member of Parliament on matters relating to employment, on the principle that there should be no taxation without representation. However, during a general election, when I shake the hand of someone in the street, I have a one in 25 chance of shaking the hand of someone with the right to vote for me.

I agree with the comments made in Committee by inner-city Members about the elusiveness of inner-city electorates. When the last boundary commission sat in advance of the 1983 general election, I had an exchange with the individual appointed by the Home Office to conduct the inquiry in my constituency. I drew his attention to the small electorates in the highlands and islands of Scotland and agreed that that fact was understandable as those constituents were a long way from London and their electors were a long way from one another. I wondered whether there could be a corollary in inner London, with its enormous daytime population. The person appointed, who is now a judge, smiled and said that he understood my problem, but could do nothing about it.

London is becoming an increasingly international city, and there is a steady increase in the number of foreigners living in the capital's centre. That means that the boundary commissioner can only make my problem worse: as the residential electorate falls, the commissioner has to expand the boundaries and, as a consequence, the daytime population becomes larger. I am not complaining about that, as we are all equal in the House, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) said, we all do our best to perform for our constituents what they ask of us.

I agree with one argument advanced in Committee by hon. Members with inner-city seats, and I believe that we have a shared experience regardless of parties. In 1983, the electorate in my constituency produced the lowest poll in the country in percentage terms, which was something of an embarrassment. In 1987, I vowed that my constituency should not come 650th again; it rose to 642nd, and in the process overtook six seats near inner London and two seats in Northern Ireland. In 1992, we did better still: we advanced to 634th. One more London seat fell below us and the two Northern Ireland seats continued to be below us; but, interestingly, the eight further seats whose poll turned out to be lower than our own were inner-city seats in, for example, Leeds, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle.

Clearly, there is a genuine problem in inner-city seats in terms of the elusiveness of the electorate. I do not know whether London is becoming more enthusiastic about voting and other parts of the country are becoming less, but I say that in response to the observation by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling).

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): As one of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents, may I ask whether the logic of his argument is that he would prefer that I voted in London against him or that I continued to vote in Scotland?

**Mr. Brooke:** The hon. Gentleman is welcome to be my constituent. We in inner-city seats value every constituent we have and, in the interests of democracy, I am perfectly happy that he should choose where he votes. If he chooses to vote against me, I am happy for him to do so.

As I say, I cannot share the willingness of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central to see London boundaries blurred in the boundary commissioners' report. I have described some of the problems that exist in inner-city seats. When I became the Member of Parliament for my seat, I had four police districts and four health authorities in my small constituency. I now have fewer police districts, but the same number of consultative committees. By definition, two local authorities are involved.

Where we have made progress in the past 15 years in terms of rationalisation, I would not wish to see us slip back. The fact that health authorities now march with local government boundaries is a major plus in terms of dealing with business in inner-city seats.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** My right hon. Friend is arguing from the particular to the general. In his area, there may be a coincidence between local authority and health authority boundaries, but that is not always the case.

**Mr. Brooke:** I was not seeking for a moment to suggest that my experience is universal. I was simply remarking that, where it does occur, it is of major benefit to the Member of Parliament concerned.

But the extraordinary mismatch between the boundaries of the Benefits and Contributions Agencies under the Department of Social Security and those of the constituency demonstrates the problems which exist for inner-city Members on top of the population issues that I have described.

All I would say is that some of the problems which we in inner-city seats have to put up with are sufficiently bad for us to notice and seek to cope with, and I would not wish them to be made worse by the suggestion that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central was pursuing.

4.52 pm

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) drew attention to a number of important points which show how, with the best will in the world, it is difficult to formulate a system of parliamentary seats which does not involve some distortion. But I share the right hon. Gentleman's view that the coincidence of boundaries for health authorities, local authorities and parliamentary constituencies is desirable wherever possible. The one complaint that I make against the Bill is that clause 3 will make that less, not more, likely, certainly in Scotland and probably in other parts of the United Kingdom.

The sour note of disagreement with the Home Secretary which I felt it necessary to inject earlier in the debate is due to my belief that, since the British Government enjoy such extraordinary and almost unlimited power derived from the dominance of a political party in the House of Commons, there is no more important and sensitive constitutional question than how the parliamentary constituencies are defined. If there is any inequity in the definition, it can produce an imbalance in government, it can distort the will of the people and can vitiate democracy itself.

It is for that reason that I do not believe that it is appropriate for a Government to bring forward a set of proposals which manifestly will change the structure of the parliamentary constituencies—that is their intention—without consultation with other political parties.

The measure was adumbrated before the election, and, notwithstanding what the Home Secretary has said, many commentators—of such knowledge and objectivity as David Butler of Nuffield college—pointed out that changes of the kind contained in the Bill would, in so far as such matters can be predicted, give the Government party additional advantage at the next general election. That in itself is not a reason for not proceeding with the Bill, but it is a reason for consulting the other parties to ensure that what is being done enjoys broad cross-party support, for reasons of equity and because it is a convention of the constitution.

This delicate constitution of ours, this unwritten constitution, if it is not to be besmirched in the eyes of the public, must see its conventions endure. The convention to which I refer was observed by one of the most distinguished Home Secretaries, Rab Butler, in 1956, the last time that a Government thought it right to alter the period during which the boundary commission would operate and draw up its proposals.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** I take the hon. Gentleman back to his point that the changes would give an additional advantage to the Government party. It is a question not of an additional advantage, but of eliminating a disadvantage which exists at the moment because the boundaries are well out of date.

Had the hon. Gentleman been present at a previous stage of the Bill—I know that he was for most of the time—he would have heard some figures to illustrate the amazing difference between the number of votes required to elect a Conservative Member of Parliament and a Labour Member of Parliament. I know that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about the situation affecting Liberal Democrat Members of Parliament but, if he reflects, he may think that it was wrong to say that the measure gave an additional advantage rather than correcting a disadvantage.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The hon. Gentleman's intervention is purely semantic. The Bill alters the number of seats which it is probable that the Conservative party will win at the next election. That can be presented as an additional advantage or the removal of a disadvantage. I accept the hon. Gentleman's intervention for what it was worth.

I do not want to lose sight of the departure of this Home Secretary from the excellent precedent and convention followed by his distinguished predecessor in 1956. The entire 20th-century history of the operation of the boundary commission, right back to 1918, rests upon multi-party agreement. The initial modern process was established by a Speaker's Conference of all parties.

The reality is that the Bill, whatever its merits—I believe that it has some merits—has been introduced for wholly partisan reasons. It is clear that, notwithstanding what the Prime Minister has said about having expected the Government to win the last election, most departmental heads were not so sure that they would win, and certainly were not sure what ministerial office they would occupy. The Home Secretary could not have put his hand on his heart before the election and told anyone that he expected to carry out his present job. It was quite clear that whoever carried the responsibilities that he carries would be charged, as a good Conservative, with ensuring that this change would come in as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** I was a great admirer of R. A. Butler and a follower of his, so I would not lightly depart from precedent. All the hon. Gentleman's indignation would be justified if this Bill were altering the rules upon which the boundary commissioners operate. It does not do so, and was deliberately drafted to avoid that. As I was pressed to agree by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) a moment ago, some all-party consultation and a serious attempt to reach a consensus would be required before we changed the rules under

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which the boundary commissioners operate. This Bill avoids that. It merely provides a timetable. It makes provision for slightly added resources by paying commissioners, and also makes clear provision for what to do as local government boundaries change, as we all know they are to change.

Otherwise, it puts in place a timetable which the vast majority of hon. Members expected to see in any event. Most people expected that the next election would be fought on new electoral boundaries. If that brings the Conservatives advantage—nobody really knows that it will—it is because of demography taking people from the cities into the suburbs; it is for no other reason planned by the Government.

Had we consulted, we would probably have put the timetable in doubt by wasting time while we did so. My understanding is that the hon. Gentleman would not object to the timetable we propose.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the Secretary of State about the length of interventions—not, I think, for the first time.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I suppose that I should be flattered to have provoked a speech of such length from the Home Secretary by way of an intervention: qui s'excuse s'accuse. He is wrong in saying that this Bill does not change the rules. It is perfectly clear that clause 3, which is the heart of the Bill, does change the rules in their effect. It is quite clear—as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said—that, as a consequence of the Bill, boundaries drawn up by local government boundary commissioners may be in place. These cannot be followed in some parts of the country; in Wales and in Scotland, where the boundaries are out of date, because the Government are proceeding with the restructuring of local government.

The purpose of the requirement in Scotland that the boundary commission shall have regard to local government boundaries, a requirement that is tampered with by this Bill, is to ensure as far as possible the coincidence of boundaries, for the sort of reasons to which the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South referred. The reality is that, if the boundary commission in Scotland follows the existing boundary commissions, its definition of parliamentary boundaries will be overtaken, possibly even within a year or 18 months, by the passage of another Bill by the House of Commons following the Government's stated intention to restructure local government. This will ensure that there is no coincidence of local government and parliamentary boundaries.

I do not say that that does not present problems, for I certainly believe that the time has come for a restructuring of local government in Scotland. I also believe that we need an accelerated timetable for introducing the new parliamentary boundary commission recommendations. But it is not acceptable for this Parliament to be bounced into a particular solution, a particular timetable, on a particular issue of electoral law summoned out of many which might have been chosen to remove distortions within our system. What adds insult to injury is the suggestion that this is not a partisan act. The reality is patently clear.

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, and what is not patently clear to me is the point that he is seeking to make. According to this Bill, the parliamentary boundary commission in Scotland must take account of the local government boundaries in force in Scotland when it makes its report. It may not take into account any boundaries that may be changed after 1 June 1994. It is very probable, therefore, that the present boundaries will be the ones to which it will have to have regard. I am not clear whether the hon. Gentleman is complaining because it will have to have regard to present boundaries or because he thinks that it might have to have regard to other boundaries, if such boundaries are brought in and legislated for before 1 June 1994. I am puzzled, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman can clear the matter up.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The Minister is in a position to follow this, because I alluded to the point at an earlier stage of the Bill, when I made the position entirely clear. He must also be well aware of what this Bill contains for Scotland, albeit that the Home Secretary appears ready to disallow collective responsibility for anything that happens north of the border.

The reality is that, as the Minister says, the boundary commission will report just before the restructuring of local government in Scotland. The consequence is that we shall very probably fight the next general election on boundaries that are drawn with regard to local government boundaries which have become historical. That is a very simple point. I cannot understand why the Minister, who is a very intelligent man and follows these things closely, cannot understand it.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman, having been a Scottish Member for some time, may recall that, when the new boundaries came into effect in the 1974 general election, it was just after the boundaries had been introduced for the new local government units in Scotland. Therefore, for a very long time, from 1974 to 1983, they represented the historical pattern of local government. That is bound to happen unless there is the happy coincidence of local government reform and parliamentary reform, which has certainly not happened in my memory.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I am afraid that this is one of the troubles of operating without a proper written constitution which orders these matters so that they can be decided within broadly the same time frame and so that, where it is in the public interest to have coincidence of boundaries, that can be achieved. It is simply another argument to reinforce the more fundamental arguments in favour of a written constitution. But that certainly goes way beyond the ambit of this Bill, which is simply tinkering in a partisan fashion with something that ought to be handled in a completely different way.

I accept that it is desirable that the boundary commissions should produce their reports before the next election, and that, in view of the consequences of frequent population changes—they seem to become more frequent—there should be reassessments more often than within the periods established in 1956. But it is remarkable that the Government have introduced a Bill which does so little; remarkable that they have not even alluded to the problems which the boundary commission mentioned in bringing forward its report last year.

That report spoke of the real problems being the problem of getting people to participate in boundary commission reviews and the problem of consistency in bringing forward particular recommendations. I believe that, notwithstanding the bland assurances of the Home Secretary, this measure will be seen for what it is: partisan legislation which could have been presented to the House of Commons and perhaps have achieved all-party agreement if it had been approached in the historical fashion, but which will none the less become law and will no doubt achieve the purposes which the Home Secretary intends.

5.8 pm

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** (Hertfordshire, West): I do not wish to be uncharitable to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), but I really thought that his was a shabby speech. The aspersions cast on my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary were wholly and completely unjustified. As for the suggestion that the justification for having a written constitution could be the coincidence of parliamentary and local government boundary reviews, that argument defies all belief.

I know of no instance of a country's written constitution in any way guaranteeing that boundaries will coincide to avoid difficulties between parliamentary and local government boundaries. That will depend on the local government boundaries and why they are being addressed. There will be many population changes over any given period, but most countries have a way of addressing problems and of sorting out boundaries, which may or may not coincide with parliamentary boundaries, or an equivalent redistribution system.

**Mr. Salmond:** The hon. Gentleman used the word "shabby". I have been watching his conduct during this debate. Earlier, he engaged in a debate with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) which presupposed that the new constituency boundaries for Berwick-upon-Tweed and East Lothian would take account of local government changes. Later, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) engaged in a debate with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) which assumed that the new Scottish constituencies would not take account of local government changes. Given the hon. Gentleman's interest in the Bill, can he say whether the new constituency boundaries in Scotland will or will not take account of local government changes?

**Mr. Jones:** The hon. Gentleman misunderstood my earlier argument. I was not saying that local government boundaries would or would not coincide with parliamentary redistribution, but that precedents show that things can go one way or the other. That reinforces the argument of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that the various parliamentary boundary commissions must get on with the job, taking into account the boundaries as they now stand. If changes occur in the meantime, that may create inconsistencies.

If the hon. Gentleman has been present for earlier debates, he would have heard me say that a procedure already exists for realigning constituency boundaries where minor anomalies exist. Only in the case of major anomalies are any problems likely to arise. I shall address that aspect later. If the hon. Gentleman will be a little patient—at least from one old St. Andrewan to another—he may learn something to his advantage. I hope so.

An accelerating rate of population change is bound to create difficulties in devising equal electorates over a lengthy period. I regret that the opportunity was not taken to compress the time scale rather more. The 1983 general election was fought on new boundaries drawn up on the 1976 quota—which meant that, by the time we fought those constituencies, their electorates had long since changed. In my case, the quota in 1976 was about 67,000, but by the time the 1983 election took place, it had already increased to 77,000. The reverse is true in some declining inner-city areas.

The last thing that we want is a parliamentary boundary commission examining every constituency boundary at every general election. We would never know where we were. However, there is a good case for compressing the time scale between the quota year and the introduction of new boundaries, so that the gap is minimised.

Earlier, reference was made to London boroughs. I was not arguing for a change in the rules. I have always thought that it is for the commission to cross London boundaries if it so wishes. I was merely arguing that that is exactly what it ought to do, because the situation has sharply deteriorated since the last redistribution. The commission was just about able to get away with the 1983 redistribution—with the exception of Surbiton, which fell some way below the norm. Most of the other constituencies came near to meeting it. Since then, many hundreds of thousands of people have moved out of London boroughs to bordering counties. Because of the stair-step approach, that makes it more difficult to ensure that London constituencies properly represent the capital without crossing borough boundaries.

The commission will probably have to follow the precedent that it set with the metropolitan districts, of grouping two boroughs together where necessary. I hope that it will go no further than that, because if more than two boroughs are grouped, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw adequate boundaries within a reasonable envelope.

The parliamentary boundary commission rightly worked according to practice and custom as well as according to the rules. It sought to minimise the effect of change by retaining constituencies which were about right and wherever possible making no alterations. That is not always easy, because of the spin-off effect of decreases or increases on the electorates of neighbouring constituencies.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) failed to take into account in his intervention the fact that the quota in his constituency increased in the intervening period from 67,000 to 69,000, and that the integrity of seats in north-east Derbyshire cannot be guaranteed if some adjustment is necessary to deal with problems elsewhere in that county.

Equally, it is desirable to have whole boroughs within parliamentary constituencies wherever possible, but that is not always simple to achieve. Nevertheless, the parliamentary boundary commission does a pretty good job of devising as much coincidence as possible.

**Mr. Barnes:** The parliamentary seats in north-east Derbyshire—Bolsover, Derbyshire, North-East and

*[Mr. Barnes]*

Chesterfield—can be affected by changes elsewhere in the county, though they could remain the same, in line with any adjustments. The danger of the Bill is its fluidity in relation to the wobbly boundaries of Derbyshire and the way in which they interlink with the local government review. The timetable means that the north-east area could be added to any other which happens to touch other county areas in Nottinghamshire or South Yorkshire.

**Mr. Jones:** That is a different point. It is similar to that made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond). The hon. Member for Bolsover has approximately 66,000 constituents—a figure below the electoral quota. It is therefore just possible that there may be changes, to bring that electorate up to the quota.

Once the commission has examined the overall entitlement of a county to a number of seats, it will have to divide that number of seats into the county's total electorate, to arrive at the county average—which might be slightly above or below the quota. One can only speculate what would happen in any particular county. That is what makes us all uncertain about our futures in terms of what may happen in our own electoral areas. That is an uncomfortable state of affairs for any politician, but it is necessary if boundaries are to be adjusted.

It is perfectly possible to deal with minor anomalies, but when it comes to major problems, the commission will have to work on the basis of the historic counties—at least for the time being. If an examination of Derbyshire's structure suggests to the commission that parts of the county should be united with the city of Sheffield, there would be a problem with the crossing of some major boundaries. I suspect, however, that in most cases of local government reform an examination will take place to decide whether there should be a single-tier or a two-tier local authority system. That need not affect the outer boundary of any historic county.

**Mr. Steen:** My hon. Friend is known to be an expert on this subject. Does he feel that parliamentary boundaries should keep as close as possible to city boundaries, or does he consider that rural and inner-city areas should be mixed, bearing in mind the different interests of the communities involved?

**Mr. Jones:** I do not want to be drawn too far down that road. In any case, I do not think that it is possible to give a single answer to my hon. Friend's question, because the position will depend on the electorates in the respective areas. Sometimes it will be appropriate to use rural areas which look towards the cities in an attempt to ensure that the number of electors is right; at other times, the boundary commission will decide to take wards away from cities and add them to rural areas in order to make the numbers equal. The city of Lincoln, for example, takes in rural wards to bring the numbers up, while the city of Cambridge loses wards to its rural areas to bring them down. I do not know what will happen—my hon. Friend's guess is as good as mine.

My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) rightly said that it was convenient for Members of Parliament to deal with single units in the case of, for instance, health authorities. He has to deal with a number of health authorities, which is a problem. Perhaps that is an argument for merging health authorities, or for dispensing with them altogether. Those of us who represent areas in the outer shires have to contend with the reverse argument: several Members of Parliament deal with the same health authority, and the logistics of getting them together for a discussion are quite different. Some of our constituents attend hospitals outside the constituencies, which leads to difficulties with the parliamentary conventions. We have to decide the extent to which we should become involved with the affairs of health authorities and hospitals outside the constituency boundaries.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. There may be difficulties here and now if the hon. Gentleman pursues that line much further.

**Mr. Jones:** As always, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for your sound advice.

We in Hertfordshire have always had a problem, in that the size of the electorate has increased steadily over many decades. Because the redistributions take place at fairly long intervals, the county has never been other than under-represented: we are constantly chasing our tails. Although the present electorate is based on the 1991 rolls, I have no doubt that, by the time the parliamentary boundary commission's report has been implemented, the current high rate of population growth—especially in the east of the county—will have rendered the boundaries out of date.

I believe profoundly in a system of single-Member constituencies, which makes us answerable to our constituents. They know who to consult about their problems. If that system is to remain, the constituency boundaries will have to be as up to date as possible. They will also have to represent a number of electors, rather than a number of problems.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) dealt with that point very effectively on Second Reading when he specifically rejected the case advanced by some of his hon. Friends that, because inner cities had more problems, the system should be weighted in their favour. The corollary is, of course, that it should be weighted against other areas. Success also leads to a large postbag and many problems. Similarly, it is impossible to take into account the number of people who work in an area without recognising the corollary that an area in which no one works should be devoid of representation. That is a nonsensical argument.

The basic principle of the Bill is that equal numbers of electors are needed in constituencies throughout the country. It is important to deal with that speedily and with certainty. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has said, the Bill will ensure that that happens. I commend it to the House.

5.24 pm

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) has come out with some special pleading. No doubt Ministers heard it, and will consider it accordingly.

I do not like the Bill. The Home Secretary said that there was no reason for hon. Members to oppose it, and that he hoped that there would be no Division. Our duty, however, is to express any reservations that we feel about

a measure on the Floor of the House, and I do not apologise—any more than I did on Second Reading and on Report—for saying that I do not like this Bill.

I cannot emphasise too strongly that that does not mean that I consider boundary changes and reviews unnecessary, any more than my hon. Friends who take the same line as I do. Of course they are necessary, and it would be illogical and wrong for anyone to suggest otherwise. It is, however, essential for the Government of the day to give the impression—a genuine impression—that they are acting in the most impartial way possible when introducing a measure, and I do not believe that the Bill would have been presented if the Government did not believe that there were parliamentary seats to be gained.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Would the hon. Gentleman be speaking now if he did not believe that there were seats to be lost?

**Mr. Winnick:** That question merely confirms the point that I was making. The Minister is saying, in effect, that I am complaining because I believe that seats will be lost—which implies a confirmation of my claim that the Government believe that there are seats to be gained.

As I have said, I believe that complete impartiality should be exercised. Seats are bound to be lost or gained accordingly; no politician would dispute that. So far as I am aware, I have not opposed measures of this kind in the past. Like my hon. Friends, I have been pretty logical and consistent.

Only two or three days after the general election and the substantial reduction in the Government's overall majority, we read in the newspapers that the Government intended to introduce this Bill. The implication was clear: the Cabinet had formed the view that there were 10 or 20 gains to be made. On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) disputed that, and I hope that he is right; whether he is right or wrong, it is essential that the Government exercise complete impartiality.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I was going to refer the hon. Gentleman to his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who sensibly said that no one could tell how the boundary commission review would work out in regard to the interests of either party.

We have introduced the Bill because we consider it wrong to hold an election on the basis of registers that are 20 years old. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would dispute that; certainly, most of his hon. Friends have not done so. If he considers it right to hold an election on that basis, he will very properly oppose the Bill. If he considers it wrong, however, he will support the Bill.

**Mr. Winnick:** The Minister has implied that I oppose the Bill because I do not believe that boundary reviews should take place. I said at the outset—as I did on Second Reading—that I believe nothing of the kind. What I object to is the haste with which the Government have presented the Bill, and the lack of consultation.

In a rather lengthy intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), the Home Secretary said that there was no need for consultation with the Opposition because there had been no change in the rules as such. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland rightly dealt with that point in connection with clause 3.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said that, in 1958, the then Home Secretary was reported as saying:

> "'The Government naturally thought it right in this matter of constitutional importance to discuss the proposals we had in mind with the other parties.'"—[*Official Report*, 15 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 679.]

The Home Secretary might be technically right—although I dispute that—in saying that as there are no rule changes there is no need for consultation with the Opposition. I cannot accept that.

In fact, it is not a question whether there are rule changes at all. What prevented the Home Secretary from consulting the other parties? He could have given Opposition parties notice of his intentions and asked whether they had any representations to make before the Bill was finally drafted and came to the House. That would have been a perfectly reasonable step to take. I must tell the Minister of State that, if that had happened, my hon. Friends and I would have found it more difficult to oppose the Bill. Perhaps I would not have opposed it in the first place.

**Mr. Steen:** As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman does not mind about the substance of the Bill, but is more concerned that discussions should take place beforehand. Does he agree that the point of parliamentary representation and democracy is that the number of electors should be as near as possible to the optimum? If that is the overriding principle, why is he so worried about discussions beforehand?

**Mr. Winnick:** I am so worried, as the hon. Gentleman puts it, for the reason that I quoted from Mr. Butler. I know that the Conservative party today is different from the Conservative party of Mr. Butler's day. I doubt whether he would feel at home in today's Tory party, although that is a matter of opinion. The reason why Mr. Butler said what he said answers the hon. Gentleman far better than I could.

The Bill has been introduced in haste and without consultation because the Government want to be sure of the gains that they believe—wrongly, I hope—it will bring. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) smiles and seems happy about his intervention. He and his hon. Friends talk about equal numbers of electors in constituencies. Like boundary changes and reviews, such ideas cannot be dismissed out of hand, and I should not wish to do so.

If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the interventions on Second Reading and on Report and to those made today by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), he would understand our worry about the fact that many people are not on the register. The recommendations are to last for some time, and elections are to be fought on them. There is little doubt that many people have kept themselves off the register for various reasons—Ministers have their explanation, we have ours, and there are no doubt many others—so it is important that the boundary commissioners should be able to take into account the fact that the recommendations are based on inaccurate assessments and figures.

The hon. Member for South Hams and others say that we should be pleased that the impartial recommendations are to be based on figures, but what satisfaction is there if the figures are inaccurate in a given constituency?

**Mr. Steen:** I have a particular problem in my constituency. When it was formed in 1983, it was already too big. It now has 86,000 or 87,000 constituents. If the Bill is passed without too much opposition, it will allow the people of Devon to have much better representation because their Member of Parliament will not represent 85,000 or 86,000 people. I cannot understand the hon. Gentleman's argument. Instead of delaying the process, we should be expediting it.

**Mr. Winnick:** The hon. Gentleman is understandably worried about his constituency. I should have thought that the United Kingdom Parliamant should be concerned with all constituencies and, as a result of the boundary commissioners' impartiality, should make recommendations in which we can have confidence. As I have already tried to explain—although this may not apply to the hon. Gentleman's constituency—in some inner-city areas many people who should be on the register are not, so I do not understand how we can have the necessary confidence. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is beginning to understand my point of view, if only to a limited extent.

I mean no disrespect to my own Front Bench spokesmen, but it is sometimes said that, if there is agreement between the Front Benches, what reason is there for a few troublemakers and dissidents to express a different point of view? It will be a sad day for Parliament and parliamentary democracy when Back Benchers who have reservations do not express them and vote accordingly. We are dealing with parliamentary democracy now, which is important to me and to all my hon. Friends.

When we expressed reservations about extending the vote to people living overseas who in most cases had no intention of returning here, it was said that we were not concerned about democracy. That was not so. We spoke and voted against the measure even although Members of our Front Bench, who are also entitled to their opinions, reached a different conclusion. I see no reason why I should lack confidence in my judgment.

The manner in which the Bill has been presented is unfortunate. The haste and lack of consultation have caused a strong feeling among my colleagues that the Government wish to obtain the maximum advantage. That is not the right way to deal with an issue about which there should be and, so far as I know, has been little or no controversy until now. The Home Secretary should ask himself why, despite some technical reservations, the Opposition in the past have not wished to argue as I and my hon. Friends are doing today and as we have done during the Bill's previous stages. Why do we feel so strongly? It is because the Government have acted shamefully in this instance, and I do not apologise for voting against the Bill.

5.36 pm

**Mr. Anthony Steen** (South Hams): I wish to raise one or two questions which have not yet been mentioned, certainly not on Third Reading.

If one were running a company or an industry, before one embarked on a new operation or new project, one would try to cost it and decide whether one could afford it. One would consider the manpower implications, where people would be housed, and the general finance. One aspect lacking in this debate—this is perhaps true of many debates—is any talk of money. What will be the cost of the boundary commission? How many extra staff will be needed and what qualifications will they have? Where will they be housed? Will they be housed in docklands?

Those questions were perhaps dealt with in Committee, but it is important to ask them on the Floor of the House. I did not attend the Committee stage, which I understand was taken on the Floor of the House.

I ask those questions again because they are important. Before legislation is passed, we should have an idea of the increased costs to the Exchequer and the increased manpower involved. I hope that the necessary manpower can be seconded from other Government Departments rather than taken on at additional cost to the taxpayer. Can the Minister reassure us that when new legislation is introduced additional staff are not automatically detailed from the civil service and additional funds found for them but that the Government will find the staff from within their establishment for the necessary length of time? The staff could then move back to their original jobs when they finished the work.

I am concerned about the ease with which the establishment of the civil service seems to increase every time we pass legislation. I should like some reassurance that we can find the additional staff required to speed up the process without having to find more money from the Exchequer. That is my rather modest, but important, contribution.

5.39 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd):** I will not try to reiterate the main lines of the debate, which have been exercised several times during the passage of the Bill. A number of questions, observations and statements were expressed in the Third Reading debate, to which I should address myself for a few minutes.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) raised three or four matters about which he was especially concerned. He was concerned about the effect of Local Government Commission changes. They will be taken into account by the parliamentary boundary commissions only if they have been legislated for and have come into effect by 1 June 1994 at the latest.

I have no idea whether any of the new boundaries, which have not yet been recommended because they have still to be decided, will favour one party or the other. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central made rather heavy weather of constructing a plot whereby the changes were bound to affect the Labour party detrimentally and were bound to favour the Conservative party. I find it difficult to believe that anyone can imagine that the local government commission, which will have to produce its recommendations after consultation, will produce boundaries that will oblige the boundary commission, when it takes them into account, to create constituencies that will favour one party or the other. I do not think that the commission could do that even if it wanted to.

The commissions are not interested in party political advantage, and it would be extremely difficult for them to act in that way even if they were. I thought that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, who was leaning forward, wanted to intervene because the thoughts that I have just ascribed to him were far from his mind. His implication that the Local Government Commission could somehow contrive parliamentary constituencies to the advantage of one party or the other is the kind of

imagining which must be abandoned if one considers the role of the two commissions and the difficulty of such a contrivance even if they so intended.

There was a misunderstanding about Wales. In Wales, provisional proposals for the parliamentary boundary commission are treated exceptionally, because Wales is well down the road in the matter of local government reform. The parliamentary boundary commission in Wales may take into account local government boundaries proposed in a Bill that has had a Second Reading, but that only concerns the provisional recommendations.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central is right to say that the Bill may be amended in its passage through the House. If it is, the Welsh parliamentary boundary commission must think again, because in its final report to the Secretary of State, it can have regard only to boundaries that have at least been encapsulated in an Act. There is therefore a real distinction between what it is enabled for convenience to take into account for its provisional recommendations and what it must take into account for its final recommendations. That distinction is important and seems to have escaped the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to London, a point on which we dwelt at length in Committee. The local government boundary commission is looking at the boundaries of the London boroughs now. Its report will be available well in time for the new boundaries it recommends, if they find favour with the House, to be taken into consideration by the English parliamentary boundary commission before the cut-off date of 1 June 1994. I gathered that that was what the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends wished to ensure would happen when they tabled amendments in Committee.

I believe that the misunderstanding and confusion—partly due to the nomenclature—concern the future role of the local government commission. It has been given the responsibility of doing exactly what the local government boundary commission now does—reviewing local government boundaries—after it has finished reviewing local government structure in the rest of England outside London.

That was the burden of the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment:

> "We intend to ask the commission to look at cases for change to local government boundaries in London when it has completed its programme of structural reviews in the shire counties."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. *368*.]

It will not have completed those structural reviews until well into this decade. As I said in Committee, I do not believe that, apart from the local government review going on now whose results we expect to hear shortly, there will be another change to the boundaries of London boroughs until well into the next century.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central may remember better than I do whether his amendment in Committee referred to possible changes between now and 12 June 2002, 2001 or 2000. The hon. Gentleman was a bit confused about the dates when he moved the amendment. However, it does not matter which of the three years it was. After the local government boundary commission has reported on the boundaries of London boroughs in the near future, the report can be taken into account by the parliamentary boundary commission in its current review. I do not expect a change to London government boundaries until the next century.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central also made a point about registration, which his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised yet again today. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East is persistent on the point. I make no complaint about that, because I accept that it is an important point. I stress again that, as far as the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is able to estimate, upwards of 95 per cent. of eligible people are on the registers.

We cannot alter the rules under which the boundary commission makes its review, because the boundary commission in England has already examined a third or so of the seats on the basis of the 1991 register. If we were to change the rules, the commission would have to go back to the beginning. The hon. Gentleman would then lose the point that he rightly makes—that the next election should be fought on more up-to-date boundaries.

I remind the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East of what I said when I dealt with the point more fully on Second Reading. If there is a concern simply about registers being up to date or more accurate, I should also like to see registers that are as accurate as possible. However, it would be wrong to change the rules and start the exercise again, because we would not be able to complete the rules in time.

As I suggested to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on Second Reading, if he is concerned about party advantage, the later and more up-to-date registers would be less in the interests of the Labour party, because they would record the continuing decline in the electorate in the Labour heartlands. Even if I were able to oblige him with the kind of amendment that he is seeking, he might at least in party political terms have second thoughts. However, I cannot make that offer to him although I should like to do so, because it would mean that the commission would have to recommence the review.

**Mr. Barnes:** The 95 per cent. figure—or the 95·5 per cent. figure that is sometimes given—is not very good. Those figures still mean that many people are missing from registers. Such figures are simply a comparison between the relevant estimated population and the people who should be on the register. However, it was not until I received replies from the Scottish Office and the Department of Health in February that I discovered that the two sets of figures are linked.

In the public realm, we seem to have the latest available figures and the figures that the boundary review is acting upon. If those figures are totally inadequate, the Bill should contain something to correct that. If we have to start from scratch again, then so be it. If we have to pay more money to do that, then we must do it. When it comes to democracy, we should not be all that concerned about the relevant financial element. We must get it right.

**Mr. Lloyd:** It is not a question of money: it is a question of time. The figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred are estimates. As there are a variety of estimates, there may be many arguments about which estimate the boundary commission should rely upon.

I do not believe the disadvantage of the inaccuracies of the 1991 registers. The 1976 registers upon which our boundaries are currently based were also inaccurate. They

*[Mr. Lloyd]*

may have been a couple of points more accurate than the 1991 registers, but they were still inaccurate. Registers tend to overestimate populations in areas that are losing population and underestimate them in areas that are gaining population.

That is why I told the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East that it cuts both ways in party political terms. However, there is no difference between us when the hon. Gentleman said that he wants the most up-to-date registers. I look forward with interest to his Bill and his various recommendations as to how we might ensure that registers are more accurate in future.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East, also referred to the guidance to the local government commission and the requirement to consult the parliamentary boundary commission. The boundary commission is one of the 30 or so statutory bodies that the Local Government Commission is required to consult. The others range from the inspectorates of schools and constabularies, health authorities, the Trades Union Congress, local chambers of commerce and all sorts of people. Some will have something useful to say, while consultation with others will simply be a matter of form and courtesy.

The boundary commission is included on the list because of its duty to take account of county boundaries. It must be kept informed of proposed reviews that may affect county boundaries. However, a new boundary will be finally taken into account only if it has been legislated for by the House. The matter comes to this House before it can be considered by the boundary commission in its final report.

**Mr. Barnes** *rose*——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Keep it short, please.

**Mr. Barnes:** Why can we not use the existing boundaries?

**Mr. Lloyd:** If new boundaries are in force, it would be eccentric not to take them into account.

I had some sympathy with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He was not concerned that the boundary commission would fail to take account of existing boundaries. He was worried that, after the boundary commission had reported on existing boundaries—that might take six months, a year or two years—there would be new local government boundaries in Scotland. The safe rule is to take into account boundaries which have been legislated for and which are in effect. We will then know that those boundaries have been through the proper processes and have received the approval of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) made an interesting and lucid speech. He said that it was difficult to draw boundaries accurately in London because there is much argument as to where those boundaries might reasonably and properly fall. He is right. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said in his opening remarks, there is sufficient guidance in schedule 2 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 and sufficient discretion for the boundary commission to take on board all the arguments and concerns that have been raised in the House and to present boundaries that are logical and defensible and which meet the requirements of that schedule.

I intervened on the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland because I was trying to follow his argument, and I was not sure that I was doing so properly. I hope that he will forgive me if I have misunderstood him. The Bill does not change the rules for the boundary commission, but it speeds up the changes so that they will take effect roughly when they were expected to, and certainly in time for the next general election.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, if we were going to change the rules, we would have consulted. My right hon. and learned Friend and I believe that several suggestions have been made, some during our debates, which we must consider jointly and collectively before the next round of changes. However, there is no time now to change the rules. Next time, there will be time to consider carefully between the parties what changes perhaps should be made to the rules that exist now.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I am grateful for the Minister's assurance that there will be inter-party consultations in future. However, I am puzzled about why he believes it necessary to whittle away at the convention of consultation on matters that affect parliamentary boundaries and elections. Even if the Minister is right—and I do not concede that there is no change in the substance of the rules, as I believe that clause 3 changes the substance—the change in time is a point upon which R. A. Butler consulted other parties in 1956.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I am unable to pontificate upon other precedents. However, if we had intended to change the rules by which the boundary commission makes its judgments, we would have wanted to consult. It may be right to introduce some changes, and we expect to consult about those. However, this time round, the only change is that which affects the timetable.

The consequent change is for the convenience of the boundary commission, and most particularly for the ease of those making representations to the boundary commission. While there are changes to local government boundaries, it is necessary for both of them to know the cut-off date for those boundaries which must be taken into account. That is why there is the cut-off date of 1 June 1994. Any boundary in force on that date is the one that the boundary commission must have regard to.

**Mr. Brooke:** In the context of the historical precedents about which my hon. Friend confessed ignorance, and in the context of the speeches of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), it may be of assistance if I point out that neither in 1956 or 1958 was Mr. R. A. Butler Home Secretary. On the first occasion, it was Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, and on the second occasion it was Gwilym Lloyd-George.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Perhaps, if he would like to intervene again, he will tell me how the boundaries in London were examined by previous commissions. That was of massive interest in earlier stages of our proceedings. However, I suspect that, if my right hon. Friend did so, his comments might not be regarded as germane to the limited context of the Bill.

**Mr. Winnick:** The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) was undoubtedly accurate, and whoever quoted 1958 was undoubtedly inaccurate. But surely the Minister does not deny that Mr. Butler was Home Secretary. If I remember rightly, he was also Leader of the House at the same time. The fact remains that he said what he said. That he did not say it in 1958 is irrelevant.

**Mr. Lloyd:** Mr. Butler held most offices in the Government at some time or other. Undoubtedly, what he said in 1958, he said. I have to confess in all honesty that I am not familiar with what he said in 1958. However, I am interested in both the elucidation that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) gives and what my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) is extremely knowledgeable on matters of boundaries. I shall not try to respond to his various arguments, although they were all interesting. However, I agree with him that a boundary commission review is an uncomfortable time for all Members of Parliament, because it affects their connection with their constituents and, indeed, whether they have a seat left to fight next time. The exception is perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who has 68,000 constituents. That is very near the quota which is guarded by the rule in schedule 2—in so far as the boundary commission is required to have regard to it—that the commission must take the boundaries of London boroughs into account; so my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea can probably feel that much more secure than anyone else.

I had a couple of exchanges with the hon. Member for Walsall, North, because he graciously gave way to me. I was left with the distinct impression that it is not so much the purpose of the Bill as the lack of consultation of which he complains. I take it from what he said that he will oppose the Bill, even though he regards it as essentially a correct measure, simply on the grounds of amour propre. He is doing the wrong thing because he was not asked. If he thinks that I am being unfair to him, he should read what he said in *Hansard*. He will see that it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that I have drawn from his remarks. His position is not a particularly principled one, although we can all understand why he takes it.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) asked me some specific questions. I can tell him the specific answer, because I have now found a copy of the Bill and the answer is conveniently on the front page. He asked how much the cost of administering the commissions would be increased by the Bill. The extra cost will be about £500,000 a year for the next three years. He also asked what would be the effect on the number of staff. We expect that about 15 additional central Government staff will be needed for those three years.

**Mr. Steen:** Bearing in mind the size of the civil service, is it not possible to second staff from some of the many Ministries so that the job can be done without additional placements being required? If there are additional placements in the boundary commissions, could we not reduce staff, rather than always increasing the numbers?

**Mr. Lloyd:** My hon. Friend has a good point. Many of the staff are on secondment from the Home Office. The cost to the boundary commissions will be the cost of the staff that they employ during the three years. I have not included any consequent saving to the Home Office while the staff are on loan. I cannot give my hon. Friend that figure now, but I shall be interested to know it, and when I do I shall let him know it too.

**Mr. Darling:** The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) cannot get away with that. It is bad enough that he did not read the Committee proceedings, as the point worried him so much. If he had done so, he would have found that the Home Secretary told the House that most of the additional expenditure would result not from employing additional staff but from the fees of barristers who are seconded to hear the hearings. The extra cost will be legal fees, not extra civil servants' time. He should not try to get away with making a rather silly point about civil servants seconded for the temporary purpose of expediting the work of the boundary commission.

**Mr. Lloyd:** I trespass into territory on which I am not certain of my facts, but logically the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) must be wrong. We are talking about the costs over three years. As the process of reviewing the boundaries is being conducted over a shorter period, it will of course cost more. However, there will not be more reviews as a result of the Bill than there would have been without it. The extra expenditure to which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central referred is expenditure which is at the most displaced. Therefore, he is mistaken in the charge that he makes against my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams.

No one has argued that the Bill does not address a real problem. No one has denied that it is a problem which needs to be addressed now. That in itself should be enough to persuade the House to support the Bill. I have no doubt that by an overwhelming majority it will do so. Therefore, I commend it to the House.

*Question put*, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 221, Noes 55.

**Division No. 45]** **[6.06 pm**

**AYES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim

Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Killedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and**
**Mr. Nicholas Baker.**

**NOES**

Ainger, Nicholas
Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benton, Joe
Boyce, Jimmy
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cohen, Harry
Cryer, Bob
Dafis, Cynog
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Etherington, William
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Donald *(Bath)*
Harvey, Nick
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Wright, Tony

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Harry Barnes and**
**Mr. David Winnick.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*
*Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.*

## Child Support

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** We come to the motions on family law, and I call Mr. Alistair Burt.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Order Paper states that motions 2,3,4 and 5, on family law, have not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. When the Government put the motions down for debate, they knew that the Joint Committee, which has a duty to consider such instruments and report on them to the House on a wide range of grounds, had not considered them. The Joint Committee considered them at a meeting which commenced at 4.30 this afternoon—the first available opportunity.

Several memoranda have been provided by the Department of Social Security to explain the instruments. The Joint Committee thought that they were of such value, as they are taken on a clause-by-clause basis, that they ought to be available to Members in the Vote Office. If we had reported them to the House, on the basis of elucidation, and had printed them, that would have been the case. Unfortunately, the meeting of the Committee has just finished, so we are unable to place the memoranda in the Vote Office, as we would wish and as we are obliged to do under the Standing Order. Therefore, hon. Members will be denied the opportunity of having the considered views of the Committee.

I emphasise that the Committee wanted to help hon. Members by providing information, but because of the haste with which the Government are rushing the regulations through—before giving the Joint Committee the opportunity to report on them to the House—hon. Members have been denied that information. I have raised this point of order because the Joint Committee has, in effect, been denied the opportunity to carry out the provisions of the Standing Order, which must be strongly deprecated.

**Mr. Richard Alexander** (Newark): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to prolong the proceedings of the House, but I serve with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. I do not agree with all the sentiments that he expressed, but the Committee considers such matters carefully and it is concerned that its deliberations, which took more than an hour and a half, will not be discussed or considered by the House tonight.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** This is not a matter over which I have any control from the Chair. However, I have taken on board the points made by both hon. Members. It might be appropriate if they seek to catch my eye or that of my successor to make those points during the debate.

6.21 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt):** I beg to move,

That the draft Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

Perhaps it will be convenient if we discuss also the next three motions on the Order Paper:

That the draft Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

That the draft Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

That the draft Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.

The House will be aware that there are four statutory instruments relating to child support to be debated today. They are the first of a number of regulations that provide the detail for the Government's new scheme for the assessment, collection and enforcement of child maintenance. The framework for this scheme, as hon. Members will recall, was provided for in the Child Support Act 1991.

It is important that we can inform the legal profession, voluntary bodies and other groups that may be affected by the new scheme of the exact detail as soon as possible so that they have sufficient time to prepare themselves for its introduction. Regulations before the House today, therefore, include the procedures to be followed in making a maintenance assessment, the detailed provisions of the maintenance formula, provisions relating to the collection and disclosure of information and various provisions to do with payment of interest on arrears of maintenance.

Further regulations, which are not subject to the affirmative procedure and make provision for the collection and enforcement of maintenance, will be laid shortly. The remaining provisions, covering the detail of the appeals system, jurisdictional issues, fees and transitional issues, will be brought forward later in the year.

**Mr. Michael Meacher** (Oldham, West): The Minister has just said that it is important that the regulations should be brought forward so that the legal profession is informed. What is his response to the charge that the regulations are being pushed through just nine days after they were laid before the House, almost before the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments was able to conclude its deliberations and certainly before other hon. Members were able to examine the result of those deliberations? Why are the Government rushing the regulations through so unnecessarily fast?

**Mr. Burt:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware of two things. First, for some time the base of the regulations has been in the domain of the interested people and lobby groups; there is nothing new in relation to them. Secondly, he will know also that, to get the agency up and running and ready for its start in April 1993, a considerable amount of work will be done by officials preparing for that start. It is therefore extremely important for them that the regulations are laid out as quickly as possible. We have moved along quickly to ensure that those officials are given the best preparation possible.

I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman has said and I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), but we have acted speedily because we want the agency up and running. There is a lot of support for what we are doing and it is important that the practical, solid base of legislation is laid. That is what we are doing.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I must add my concern to that expressed about the deliberations of the Joint Committee and the fact that the regulations were laid just nine days ago. More than 100 organisations responded during the consultation period

*[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]*

and all the information gathered from them is still within the precincts of the Minister's Department—none of it is in the public domain. We do not even have access to what the specialist advisers have said about the regulations, which makes things difficult when we are discussing complicated legislation.

**Mr. Burt:** The Government have done nothing to prevent the interested groups from making public the information that they kindly submitted during the consultation period. I would be happy if they had done so. There is no problem about the speed with which we are considering this matter. The general terms of the regulations are well known to the people concerned. They also know how important it is to get the base legislation laid, which is what we are doing now.

**Mr. Cryer:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Burt:** Of course, but I am anxious to make some progress.

**Mr. Cryer:** The Minister says that there is no problem, but there is. If the House sets up a Committee to look at statutory instruments and to report to the House, the Government should take note of that. The Committee aimed to produce memoranda, which the Department had prepared for our Committee in order to help hon. Members. We aimed to make that available to hon. Members on both sides of the House so that they could have a greater understanding of the regulations. It is complacent of the Minister to say that there is the Government's action today. The Government must take the Joint Committee's work into account.

**Mr. Burt:** I take careful note of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I can add little to what I have said about our need to get on with the regulations. People are depending on us to get the base work done so that the Child Support Agency, which is so important, can get up and running.

The principles behind the scheme were debated during the passage of the Child Support Bill and I think it is fair to say that, although some hon. Members expressed concern about certain proposals, there was widespread support for the fundamental aims of the scheme. I am sure that the House recalls well the strong and persuasive arguments put forward by my predecessors, both of whom I am pleased to see have moved on to higher office since this subject was last before the House. Let me summarise their arguments.

The responsibilities of parenthood are, of course, much more than just financial, but I am sure we all nevertheless recognise the importance of parents' responsibility to maintain their children. Regular payment of maintenance is of benefit to children and to those providing care for them. Most obviously, it provides a regular income to meet the day-to-day needs of the child. Maintenance is also an income that can be taken with the person with care when he or she moves from dependence on benefit into work. Three quarters of lone parents on income support have expressed a desire to work now or in the near future.

Unfortunately, the current system for child maintenance is fragmented and uncertain and does not work as it should. Awards are often inconsistent, even where the people involved appear to be in very similar circumstances. There is no automatic way for awards to be reviewed to take account of increasing costs or changing circumstances.

Obtaining maintenance can require a significant effort from the person caring for the children, who may be having to cope with the breakdown of a relationship at the same time. If payment falls into arrears, as too many often do, the person caring for the children has to ask the courts to take action. There can be significant delays before payment is re-established. As a result, in 1989, only 30 per cent. of lone mothers and 3 per cent. of lone fathers received regular child maintenance. About two thirds of lone parents are reliant on income support to meet the day-to-day living expenses of themselves and their children. It is not right that, where a parent is capable of supporting his or her children, this responsibility should be transferred to taxpayers who often have children of their own to support. As my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State, now Lord President of Council, quite rightly pointed out, many taxpayers have children of their own to support.

The Government's response to those problems was laid out in the White Paper "Children Come First". Following this, changes have already been made to the benefit rules to provide support and encouragement for lone parents to work, if they wish to do so, and the Child Support Act has laid out the framework for the new system for the assessment, collection and, if necessary, enforcement of child maintenance.

There are two main features to the new scheme. First, maintenance will be assessed by an administrative formula which will ensure consistency between awards. The rules governing the formula will include provision for regular review to take account of changing circumstances.

Secondly, the Government will set up the Child Support Agency, within the Department of Social Security, with specific responsibility for tracing absent parents, for assessing their maintenance liability and for ensuring that full payment of that liability is made. The new scheme will be introduced in April next year.

The Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations cover the procedures associated with the making of a maintenance assessment. Many of the regulations are technical provisions detailing the procedures for applications, reviews and terminations of assessments.

Regulations 2 to 7 deal with application for maintenance assessments, including the issue and completion of relevant forms, and provisions to determine which application will be proceed with if more than one person applies in respect of the same child.

If an absent parent does not provide the information required to assess his—I say "his" for shorthand purposes—liability for maintenance, the child support officer may make an interim maintenance assessment. That assessment establishes the absent parent's liability and will provide an incentive for absent parents to supply information to the agency on time. The absent parent is given a full 28 days to co-operate before an interim maintenance assessment can be made and it will last only as long as the absent parent fails to supply the required information. The provisions for those assessments are made in regulations 8 and 9.

Regulations 10 to 16 are largely technical provisions relating to the notification of decisions, but the House may

wish to note the provisions of regulation 10, which ensure that no information will be included in notifications which would allow one party to be traced by the other.

Regulations 17 to 23 provide for reviews of the assessment to take place. That will normally occur at least annually, but provision is made for earlier review if there has been a significant change in the circumstances of any of the parties to the assessment.

Regulations 24 to 29 and 30 to 33 are also largely technical. The former deal with the situation where a party asks for a review of a child support officer's decision under section 18 of the Child Support Act, and make provision, for example, as to the time limits involved and notifications to be made. The latter deal with dates from which assessments will take effect.

Regulations 34 to 50 provide for a reduction in benefit to be made where a parent with care in receipt of income support, family credit or disability working allowance fails to comply with obligations imposed by section 6 of the Child Support Act. That section requires the parent with care to authorise action to be taken and provide necessary information to allow maintenance to be recovered from the absent parent.

**Ms. Dawn Primarolo** (Bristol, South): Will the Minister explain where in the Bill procedures are available for appeal against a punitive decision? I have in mind an appeal on the interpretation of the regulations and failure to disclose the name of an absent parent. What procedure would a woman be able to follow to defend herself against her benefit being stolen by the state?

**Mr. Burt:** I cannot share some of the value judgments with which the hon. Lady concluded that intervention. The regulations in relation to a cooling-off period and the appeal process are contained in the regulations that we are now discussing. I will say more about the procedures shortly.

**Ms. Primarolo:** I am questioning the Minister not about a cooling-off period but about a woman having a right of appeal against a decision, referred to in the regulations, which would have the effect of taking away her benefit because of her failure to disclose the name of the absent father. That revolves around the definition of fear of violence, harassment or intimidation. That is not spelt out in the regulations but is left to interpretation. Where there is interpretation, there must be grounds for appeal. The hon. Gentleman has not mentioned those.

**Mr. Burt:** There are grounds for appeal to a social security appeals tribunal where a benefit direction is given to reduce benefit. If the hon. Lady will allow me to make progress, I will explain the circumstances which are obviously troubling her. I may be able to reassure her or satisfy some of her concerns.

Hon. Members will know that the issue was the subject of much debate during the passage of the Child Support Bill. The Government responded in a constructive way to address the legitimate concerns expressed to us then. In particular, we made provision in the Act for cases where, if the parent were to co-operate, there would be a risk of harm or undue distress either to her or to any child living with her. If there are reasonable grounds for believing that to be the case, the requirement to co-operate will be waived. The provision gives scope to enable each case to be looked at individually—this answers the intervention of the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo). That is why there is no definition given in the measure. It is designed to give flexibility to the officers dealing with the case so as to allow the widest possible range of circumstances of undue distress to be taken into account.

**Several hon. Members** ——

**Mr. Burt:** I will give way after I have completed this section of my remarks. I remind hon. Members that we have made it clear on many occasions that, although corroboration of evidence will be welcomed, we will accept the uncorroborated evidence of a parent in such circumstances unless there are strong reasons not to do so. We will bend over backwards in the case of all mothers who may put forward good reasons why they should not name a parent, for it is not our wish to see those mothers caused any difficulty or distress. The regulations and the advice and training given to officers will make that perfectly clear.

**Ms. Primarolo:** The Minister talks about corroboration in respect of violence. It is unclear in the measure whether such corroboration needs to be, say, a court order or repeated reports to the police. Am I to understand from the Minister's remarks that, if a woman says that she fears violence as a result of disclosing the name of her partner, her word will be good enough and there will be no further proceedings to trace the absent father? If that is the case, it is not stated in the measure.

**Mr. Burt:** The hon. Lady is correct, and I repeat that the Government have made it clear on many occasions that, although corroboration would be welcomed, we will accept the uncorroborated evidence of a parent unless there are strong reasons not to do so. So we do not require corroboration in the manner suggested by the hon. Lady.

The difficulty is that were we to set the matter out in line-by-line terms, we might find that we were excluding women who had got themselves into situations of equal distress or fear which were not covered by, or set out in, a regulation. The purpose of keeping it flexible is to enable us to deal precisely with the point that the hon. Lady raised. Of all lone mothers—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) should not laugh, because I am dealing with a serious point.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** I was not laughing.

**Mr. Burt:** The hon. Gentleman certainly was. He should keep his face straight.

Of all lone mothers who currently do not give the name of the father, only 3 per cent. say that that is because of the fear of violence. I am anxious that this key provision is not taken to be the sort of matter that discolours the rest of the regulations and what we are seeking to do. The basis of the regulations is to try to produce a better system for the maintenance of the child. We are attempting to balance the relationship and responsibilities of fathers with that of the state in general. By keeping the provisions flexible in the way that I suggested, we can best reassure mothers who may have concerns or be in distress. That is the way in which we propose to proceed.

**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm** (Edinburgh, Leith): The problem is encapsulated in the word "flexibility". We are already seeing flexibility in the way the provisions are interpreted. I have several examples in Edinburgh of

*[Mr. Malcolm Chisholm]*

people being harassed. If a woman says that she is frightened by the threat of violence, will that be acceptable? Are there any other exemptions? The Minister's figure of 3 per cent. suggests that there are many other good reasons why mothers may not wish to name the father. Is the Minister saying that none of those will be acceptable?

**Mr. Burt:** No. I gave violence as an example. Concern about a risk of harm or undue distress to the mother or to any child living with her could arise in a variety of ways, which is why it is kept flexible.

We recognise that this is a very difficult area and we will monitor these cases very carefully. Having said that, it remains true that both parents have a responsibility to do what they can to ensure proper financial provision for their children. In the same way that an absent parent should not be able to refuse to pay maintenance that he can afford for his child, a mother should not, without good cause, be able to refuse to co-operate in obtaining maintenance for her child. This is therefore a necessary and important measure.

The Child Support (Maintenance Assessment and Special Cases) Regulations deal with the calculation of child support maintenance. The basic formula for this calculation is included in schedule 1 to the Child Support Act 1991. The regulations fill in the detail in the formula, including the actual values that will be used in the calculations, and make provision for any special cases that might arise.

Regulations 3 and 4 provide for the calculation of the maintainence requirement, which represents the amount that is required to meet the basic day-to-day needs of a child. This is based on income support allowances and includes an allowance for the child and, if the child is under the age of 16, a further allowance for the person with care of the child. There is one charge from the proposals set out in the White Paper. We originally intended to reduce the allowance included for the person with care when the youngest child included in the assessment reached 11 and would be spending a larger part of the weekday at school. Several commentators felt that the role and financial responsibilities of the carer do not, in fact, reduce when the child reaches 11. Upon reflection, we agree with this view and, therefore, this allowance will not now be reduced.

The proportion of a parent's assessable income—income left after meeting essential needs—which will be available for child support maintenance is provided for in regulations 5 and 6. An absent parent will be expected to pay one half of his assessable income in maintenance until the maintenance requirement is fully met. After that, and subject to an upper limit, one quarter of his remaining assessable income will be added to his maintenance assessment.

Regulation 7 and schedules 1 and 2 set out the rules for the calculation of the income available to an absent parent, including the extent to which different sorts of income are to be disregarded. Regulation 8 provides that the same rules apply for the parent with care. In the main, we have adopted existing practices for the calculation of income in the income-related benefits.

A parent is allowed an amount of income, known as exempt income, to meet his essential day-to-day needs. This is the first charge on his net income before any money is available to start meeting maintenance obligations. We therefore thought it important to confine this exempt income to amounts broadly reflecting income support rates, together with allowances for housing costs and for the needs of any natural or adopted child of the parent who is living with him. Regulation 9 sets out amounts allowable in exempt income, which depend on the exact circumstances of the absent parent and are, in the main, based on the various income support allowances and premiums that would be applicable. Regulation 10 provides that the same rules will apply to the calculation of the exempt income of the parent with care.

Hon. Members will, no doubt, recall that the maintenance formula includes provision to ensure that the absent parent is not left worse off after paying maintenance than he would be if he were on income support. That is achieved by calculating the protected income for the absent parent and all his family living with him. This figure is compared to the disposable income available to the family and maintenance will be payable only to the extent to which disposable income exceeds protected income.

The components of protected income are described in regulations 11 and 12. These include allowances for any partner and children, including step-children. There is also allowance for other expenses, such as housing costs and council tax, and there is a flat-rate margin of an additional £8 in each absent parent's case. Where total family income is greater than this basic amount, a further additional allowance of 10 per cent. of the excess is made to ensure that the absent parent is not discouraged from increasing his income.

Regulation 13 defines the minimum level of maintenance payable as 5 per cent. of the income support personal allowance for a single adult aged 25 or over. At today's benefit levels, that would involve a payment of £2·15 per week. We believe that it is important to establish both the liability for maintenance and the habit of making payment as early as possible, and hence that all liable persons should make some contribution to the maintenance of their children. There are, however, some special cases where this minimum amount could cause hardship, and regulation 26 sets out a number of conditions where the minimum maintenance will not be payable—for example, where the absent parent is disabled.

Regulations 14 to 18 make provision for the treatment of housing costs under the formula and cover, for example, the apportionment of responsibility for housing costs where the parent is a joint owner of his home. Regulation 18, in particular, sets a ceiling on the amount of weekly housing costs to be included in the calculation of an absent parent's exempt and protected income. That will reduce any incentive for an absent parent to lower his liability for maintenance by deliberately increasing his housing costs to unreasonable levels.

Part III of the regulations deals with special cases. The maintenance formula, as set out in the Act, is designed to deal with the most common case, where the child lives with one person and there is one absent parent from whom maintenance is sought. There will, however, be other, less common, situations—for instance, where both parents are absent or where the child spends some time with each parent. The regulations provide for the application of the standard maintenance formula to be appropriately amended in such circumstances.

Although I do not intend to describe in detail each of the different types of special case, I should like to mention

the provision dealing with the shared care of a child. We have decided that, provided the absent parent has the child for at least two nights a week on average, the maintenance he has to pay will be reduced. That is provided for in two different ways. First, an allowance will be made in the absent parent's exempt income in respect of the time his children spend with him. In addition, regulation 20 provides for the weekly amount of maintenance to be reduced in proportion to the number of night's care provided by the absent parent. We think that that provision strikes the proper balance between the interests of both parents and the interests of the child, given that shared care should mean joint responsibility for all important aspects of a child's upbringing, nurture and day-to-day care and costs.

Finally, regulation 28 sets out the conditions upon which a deduction can be made from an absent parent's income support. The effect of the regulation is that deductions will be taken only from absent parents who are aged 18 or over, who are fit and who have no children living with them. The deduction will be at the same rate as the minimum amount already defined in the regulations —5 per cent. of the income support personal allowance for single people aged 25 or over. That is the same level as for other standard deductions from income support and will be subject to the overall 15 per cent. ceiling.

We think that it is right that absent parents should not escape their responsibilities simply because they are receiving income support. A deduction from benefit will demonstrate an absent parent's liability and will establish a pattern of contributing to maintenance for his children.

I turn now to the provisions of the Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations. Regulations 2 to 7 deal with the collection of information. The Child Support Agency will have to collect information to identify and trace an absent parent, to assess the amount of maintenance payable and to collect and, if necessary, enforce the maintenance due.

During the passage of the Child Support Bill, a number of legitimate concerns were expressed about the sort of information that would be required and the powers that the agency would have. The Government have carefully considered all the comments that were made and believe the regulations strike the right balance between empowering the agency to collect the information required to deal with an application for child maintenance and safeguarding the privacy of the people with whom the agency deals.

We expect that information will normally be obtained from parties to the assessment themselves. In some limited circumstances, however, where the relevant party is unable or unwilling to provide the necessary information, it may be necessary to collect limited information from some third parties. Provision for that is made in regulations 2 and 3, taken together, which define what information may be required and from whom. Information may be required only for specific purposes directly relevant to the operation of the assessment, collection and enforcement of child support maintenance; and it may be required only from parties to the assessment themselves or, for particular items only, from their employer, their local authority or the courts. The remaining regulations in part II—regulations 4 to 7—provide further amplification of the detailed procedures governing the supply of information to the Child Support Agency.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** I am intrigued. There is reference to disclosure of information. Regulation 7 says:

"Subject to Her Majesty not being in residence, an inspector appointed under section 15 of the Act may enter any Crown premises for the purpose of exercising any powers conferred on him by that section."

Does that include Windsor castle?

**Mr. Burt:** I believe that the answer is yes. I am not strictly certain when that might come up, but it is certainly provided for in the regulations—which only goes to show how all-embracing and comprehensive the Government can be.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** In future, the problem of absent parents may not be restricted to commoners.

**Mr. Burt:** We may be trespassing into areas that could cause grave concern and danger to us—the Tower of London and things like that. I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we shall proceed carefully from this point. If I may, I shall finish with the regulations.

Section 50 of the Child Support Act makes it a criminal offence for information to be disclosed without legal authority. Regulations 8 to 11 specify the very limited circumstances in which it will be possible to disclose information gathered for child support purposes.

Finally, the Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations introduce a number of provisions to deal with circumstances in which maintenance is not paid correctly. Those regulations apply where the Child Support Agency has responsibility for the collection of maintenance payments.

The charging of interest on arrears provides a major incentive to ensure that absent parents make full payment of maintenance, and regulations 3 to 7 make the necessary provisions.

A number of safeguards are included to ensure that the absent parent is not charged interest where that would not be reasonable—for example, interest will be charged only if the absent parent has been notified of the existence of the arrears.

Where the absent parent is not able to clear any arrears immediately, interest will not be payable, provided he makes and adheres to an agreement to clear the arrears by instalments. A period of 28 days is allowed from the date the payment is missed for the absent parent to reach agreement with the Child Support Agency about the terms of such an agreement. Should an agreement not be made or adhered to, however, the absent parent will be charged interest for the whole period in which the arrears remain outstanding.

Only when increased income support payments have fully compensated a parent with care for the loss of income as a result of non-payment of maintenance will the interest be retained by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In all other circumstances, any interest payable will be paid to the maintenance recipient.

I am grateful that the House has allowed me time to set out in detail the important regulations before us. Taken together, they provide a comprehensive background to the new system of maintenance that we are introducing through the Child Support Agency. We want a better and a more secure system of maintenance for children. We are aware of some of the concerns that have been expressed,

*[Mr. Burt]*

particularly those reiterated by the hon. Member for Bristol, South. If she catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall deal with those matters when I wind up.

I genuinely believe that the proposed system is better than the current ad hoc system. It will work better and it has the good will of many people. I am determined that we shall work hard to reassure those who have expressed concern about certain aspects by the time the system is introduced.

I commend the regulations to the House.

6.51 pm

**Mr. Michael Meacher** (Oldham, West): I have just listened to the Minister explain in considerable detail many complicated regulations, including several special cases. He has simply reinforced the complaint that some of us made at the outset—that the Government are unnecessarily rushing the regulations through. They were laid only nine days ago and it is only half an hour since the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments finished its deliberations on those complicated matters. The Minister said in response to that complaint that it was important to have a solid base in place for the lawyers and administrators to do their work. However, it is just as important that hon. Members should have enough time to play their role in examining and criticising the regulations. I simply do not believe that hon. Members have been given that opportunity, particularly in respect of the Joint Committee's findings. The Minister's failure to meet that argument shows the contempt in which the Government hold the House. I protest strongly at the procedure that the Government have chosen to adopt in this instance.

I make it clear at the outset that the Opposition very much support the principle behind the Child Support Agency—that parents should contribute to the maintenance of their children. The only reason why we are not voting against the regulations today is not because we do not have serious disagreements with important aspects of them but because, under the procedures of the House, we can vote against those aspects only by voting down the regulations as a whole, which would cut away our support for the underlying principle.

The Government have made certain improvements in the regulations as a result of the consultation, but I am not being churlish in saying that those improvements are pretty minuscule. The Government have hardly budged on the important aspects on which there is a consensus of opposition among all the expert organisations consulted. We welcome the increased level of protected income for low-paid absent parents, and the increase in the personal allowance for lone parents with children over the age of 11, which rightly recognises that lone parents have a legal and moral duty to care for their children up to the age of 16. We also welcome the fact that absent parents on income support who are under 18 years of age will not have to pay. Obviously, however, that introduces the arbitrary distinction that those who are 19 will still have to pay.

By far the most important objection is to the benefit penalty, over which the Minister seemed to glide rapidly. He was held to account only by the questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo). He seemed to offer little justification, despite all the consultations, as to why the Government were sticking to that principle. I expected him to discuss it at greater length, but he did not. The independent organisations unanimously oppose the benefit penalty, but the Government have refused to listen to the advice given.

Drawing on the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), I believe that the same advice was given by all 100 organisations which provided evidence, but because the Government have not published that evidence, we cannot be certain. Will the Under-Secretary of State confirm that in winding up the debate? It is not enough to say that the organisations can publish their work separately. If we are to have a citizens charter that means something, the public are entitled to know about this matter of acute concern. A large section of the population—there are more than a million lone parents—should know what was in the evidence submitted to the Government by that large number of organisations.

The benefit penalty was the issue on which the original clause was defeated in Committee in another place. The Secretary of State then insisted on reintroducing it, no doubt because the Thatcherite purpose behind the Bill of saving public expenditure far overrode such minor considerations as the welfare of the child or the aggravation of poverty. Ministers have never answered key questions about the ill effects of the benefit penalty, and the Minister has made no attempt to do so today. The Government like to proclaim the slogan that children come first——

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe):** Children do come first.

**Mr. Meacher:** I am glad to have confirmation of that from the Under-Secretary of State. In that case, how is it in the children's interest to pursue maintenance when to do so is likely to disrupt a reconciliation process, disrupt the father's current relationship or his relationship with his new family, or cause the father to press for access or other rights over the child? The Government's view is that maintenance and access are completely different, and I agree with that, but it is not the view which research has shown is held by either party. Both parents believe that, if maintenance is provided, it is not unconditional. That is an important point. How can it be right to insist on a benefit penalty in such circumstances? Above all, how can it be in the child's interest if the benefit penalty increases poverty in the family, as it is bound to do?

I do not believe that the Minister can deny that. I know that the penalty is supposed to be a reduction in the personal allowance of the caring parent, but it is disingenuous of the Government to pretend that a 20 per cent. reduction in the family income—25 per cent. in the case of a lone parent under the age of 18—for six months in the first instance, will not gravely affect the child. That is the question that the Minister did not mention, let alone answer, today. We want such questions answered; they are at the heart of the regulations.

It is not as though the income support rates are not already cut to the bone. The Government have reduced income support rates, relative to average earnings, during the past eight years, one year after another. One quarter of all claimants of income support already have their income support deducted to repay social fund loans and a variety of different arrears. Single parenthood is already well understood to be one of the major causes of child poverty.

The 20 per cent. penalty on top of that is the last straw. A cut of £8·49 a week for the first six months and then half of that, £4·24 a week, for the next year is punitive.

**Mr. Burt:** The hon. Gentleman is talking as though the procedure were par for the course and the vast majority of people would be affected in that way. Surely he listened more carefully than that to what I said about the way in which we shall implement the legislation. We are dealing only with mothers who refuse to name the father and who do not have good reason not to name him. We are trying to establish the principle that, where it would cause undue distress or fear of harm, what the hon. Gentleman suggests will not come into play. There is no good reason why, in those circumstances, anyone should be affected by the reductions of which he speaks.

**Mr. Meacher:** I was going to come to section 46, which I am well aware is at the heart of the legislation, but will the Minister assure the House that, in all cases where there is good reason, the mother will not be subjected to the benefit penalty?

**Mr. Burt:** That is so.

**Mr. Meacher:** The Minister says that that is the Government's intention. We have also been told that it is their intention that the social fund will be used with discretion and sensitivity so that all those in need will find their needs met. The manifest failure of the social fund to begin to meet the extreme poverty which exists among a large section of the population does not inspire confidence in the Minister. I do not doubt the Minister's sincerity, but I have doubts about what will happen in practice.

I believe that the pressure behind the Bill—to recover public expenditure—will be the driving force in terms of maintenance payments, not the welfare of the child or protecting the mother. I firmly believe that recovering public expenditure is the purpose behind the Bill, and that those other considerations are secondary. However, the Government have made up their mind, and their policy will ultimately be tested by experience.

I do not believe that the number of cases will be just a few, a handful, or something so easily dismissed as the Minister suggests. I think that there will be a significant number of cases. In some extreme cases the policy could work against the child's interests. Due to financial pressures on the family, it could lead to the child being taken into care or to deficiencies in the family's diet which could result in ill health. I do not believe that the Minister can deny that possibility. Everything hinges on the interpretation of whether the mother has good cause, and where the onus lies. The Department of Social Security does not inspire me with much confidence when I consider the way in which it has handled extremely intimate and sensitive matters in the past.

The fundamental issue to consider today is this: does the Under-Secretary of State believe that risking those consequences—that is putting it mildly—in some cases and exacerbating poverty in almost all cases where deductions are made, is in the child's interests or puts children first? If not, is it not clear that, after all the consultations, the regulations are still more about saving public expenditure than about the welfare of the child? If maintenance is paid, none of it goes to the caring parent or the child, but to the Department of Social Security. If it is not paid, the child suffers indirectly, as well as the parent who cares. That is the nub of our case against the regulations.

I am well aware that section 46 of the Act bears on that important issue. The exemption clause allows a child support officer to take no further action against a lone parent where

"if she were to be required to comply, there would be a risk of her or of any children living with her suffering harm or undue distress as a result of complying."

The great weakness of that subsection is that it is discretionary. The Minister tried to make out that the great merit in the subsection was its flexibility, but the problem with discretion is that there will almost certainly be cases where it should be, but is not, exercised, and it will almost certainly lead to arbitrariness. Moreover, when we consider how the DSS has exercised its discretion in other matters, we are not encouraged to place our trust in it.

The only reason for the dispute across the Dispatch Box is the Government's constant rejection of a maintenance disregard and their insistence on a punitive benefit penalty. One cannot help noticing the difference in treatment currently given to two groups by the DSS. Mothers on income support are expected to comply with the Child Support Agency. If they do not, one fifth of their extremely meagre income of £42 per week will be docked. Meanwhile, banks which are knowingly in receipt of more than £200 million of stolen assets from the Maxwell pension funds are asked by the Secretary of State to "examine their consciences". They are asked to consider whether they have a "moral obligation". They are not expected to comply or be penalised if they do not; but to consider the matter and decide whether to hand back stolen property. What a contrast in the attitude of our Thatcherite Secretary of State!

Even the Government's other bêtes noires—those who make themselves unemployed according to the Government's definition—are not treated so badly as lone parents. I refer to the so-called voluntarily unemployed —a wonderful phrase—who suffer a variable deduction, which may be for 26 weeks, but could equally be for one day or any period in between. Under the Child Support Act 1991, however, the deduction is for a fixed time—the full period. The voluntarily unemployed can have their deduction halved where a member of the family is seriously ill or pregnant, but the regulations contain no such provision in the case of lone parents subject to the 20 per cent. benefit deduction.

If the Government insist against all advice on having a benefit deduction for lone parents, the very least that they could do would be to make the time scale discretionary and reduce it in certain circumstances. One can think of a variety of such occasions—serious illness in the case of the voluntarily unemployed, pregnancy, the need for special diets for one or more family members, or where the house is particularly hard to heat. Yet one searches in vain through 85 pages of regulations for any evidence of how discretion would and should be used in such cases. That is a serious deficiency in the regulations.

The only other major objection to the regulations that I want to raise concerns second families on low incomes. It has been stated repeatedly that a maintenance levy will have the effect of putting two families on income support levels rather than one. I would be the first to accept that the Government have made some minor helpful adjustments, but the regulations will still transfer almost

*[Mr. Meacher]*

the whole of any increase in the second family's income to the first family. That is surely indefensible, especially when it is the increased income of the new partner rather than the absent parent which is diverted.

The really important point here surely is that despite all the consultations the Government have still not accepted the principle that absent parents should be zero-rated for the purposes of maintenance payments so long as they remain on unemployment benefit or income support. That seems a reasonable provision if we are not simply to transfer poverty from one family to the next, and that surely is not the aim of the Child Support Agency.

The regulations, 85 pages of them, which result from almost 100 regulation-making powers in the Act, still leave open many vital questions about how the powers would be operated. They embody an important principle which we all support, but they are spoilt by the unnecessarily punitive nature of the benefit penalty and by the harsh treatment in many cases of second families.

It is sad that, in the face of all the evidence from the consultations, the Government are still so wedded to the idea of compulsion for those on income support when for all other groups in society it is the language of incentives which prevails. That is why the Opposition, for all our commitment to the fundamental principle of maintenance payments, can give the regulations only limited support in terms of their detail and practical application.

7.11 pm

**Mr. Andrew Rowe** (Mid-Kent): I intrude in the debate with considerable trepidation because those assembled here know far more about the issue and the regulations than I do, but I have one or two points to make. I have already told my hon. Friend the Minister that I fear that I may have to wait for his answers until I read them in *Hansard* tomorrow, because I have another engagement for which I shall have to leave shortly.

Listening to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), I was, as I have often in the past been, somewhat astonished at the assertiveness with which he declared that he was wholly in favour of the principle and the extraordinary difficulties that he then paraded in turning that principle into practice. That can only be a reflection on the enormous length of time that Opposition Members have had to spend being unable to turn principles into practice.

The truth of the matter is that the regulations are designed to try to make an exceptionally difficult and complex area of policy work in practice. I was particularly relieved, as I had expected to be, when my hon. Friend declared that the Government would assess with great care how the regulations work out in practice, because there are some difficult issues within them.

It may be just that I am ignorant of the details of the regulations on this point, but I thought that the hon. Member for Oldham, West said that every penny that was paid by a maintaining parent went directly to the Department of Social Security. My understanding is that, where a parent has a sizeable income, the maintenance will substantially improve the child's quality of life.

In his traditional and in many ways commendable anxiety to bring the needs of the poorest to the House, the hon. Member seems to have forgotten that a sizeable number of single parents have an absent or an ex-spouse who is earning a considerable sum of money. The idea that the state should have to pick up the cost of maintaining their children when their incomes are more than sufficient to maintain them, is ridiculous. If the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the principle of the Bill means anything, it must surely mean that he supports that principle in practice.

The first point that I should like my hon. Friend to address when he replies concerns the fact that, where the state tries to attach some part of a family's income for any purpose, there is an inevitable incentive for those who are not entirely scrupulous to try to disguise the size of their income or to distort or to hide it in various ways.

Looking at the regulations, I was unclear about the penalty arrangements for a false declaration or for trying to divert one's income in inappropriate ways so that the statement to the inspector was false.

For the reasons that I have already sketched, I particularly welcome my hon. Friend's point that he was anxious not to create disincentives for absent parents to increase their incomes.

The other important point, which is well illustrated by the dismaying statistic of 3 per cent. of lone parents being fathers, is that one of the consequences of this important reform in making a reality of parents' responsibility for the children they create is that there will undoubtedly emerge quite quickly an even stronger feeling among some fathers that they are being denied appropriate access to their children.

It is bad enough now when fathers frequently have considerable difficulty in obtaining in practice the access that the courts have given them to their children. That will become much more a bone of contention if the fathers are contributing to the maintenance of their children without any choice and under a regime which would punish them for not doing so. If, in those circumstances, the same rigour is not provided by the authorities to enable them to claim the access which the courts have given them but which frequently in practice may be virtually impossible, there will be a justifiable outcry. I feel strongly that absent fathers are frequently badly treated in those respects. I hope that, even if there is nothing that my hon. Friend can say tonight, he will look carefully at the consequences of the regulations on that aspect.

I look forward to reading the answers to my questions tomorrow, because I am afraid that, to my regret, I shall not be here to hear them tonight.

**Mr. Cryer:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I intervene now it will save me from making a speech. Earlier, on a point of order, I said that the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments had not had sufficient time to deal properly with these instruments because the Government were rushing them through, and that we had made an effort to help the House by providing the memoranda which were provided by the Department of Social Security, but which, because of time constraints, we were unable to place in the Vote Office. There are 36 pages. I am happy to tell the House that, as a result of the considerable efforts of the Committee Clerk, copies of the memoranda are in the Vote Office. That should be recognised as a valuable contribution, largely at the hands of the Clerk, certainly not with the help of the Government, to the House tonight.

7.20 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Wicks** (Croydon, North-West): By the year 2000, only one in two children in Britain will experience what many would regard as a conventional childhood. By that I mean being born to parents who are married to each other, and spending one's childhood up to the age of 16 or 17, say, living still with parents married to each other. That projection alone is one indicator of why the regulations and the Act to which they relate are so important. The Act is important; therefore, the regulations and getting them right are absolutely crucial.

It is estimated that one in four children born this year will have parents who divorce by the time the children reach the age of 16. Every year, some 150,000 children in Britain under 16 see their parents' marriage break up. When that is related to the phenomenon of an increase in the number of single mothers in this country and the fact that cohabiting partners with children may also break up —something not captured in the official divorce statistics —it can be seen why the issues at stake are so important.

We are faced with two vital questions, with which the regulations seek to grapple: first, what are the financial costs of these family changes, and, secondly, who should meet those costs?

At the moment, most of the costs are undoubtedly being met by mothers and children, through poverty. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) spoke about better-off families, but in fact seven out of 10 one-parent families—70 per cent.—draw income support, and during their one-parent-family lives, as many as 85 per cent. will draw income support. I therefore believe that it is right that the Act puts the principle of parental responsibility at the heart of this legislation. This legislation needs to be joined soon by a measure from the Lord Chancellor to put children at the heart of the divorce law reform process. That is the partner to this Act to which some of us on both sides of the House look forward.

In the rest of the world—the United States and Australia in particular come to mind—these questions are being addressed. Labour Governments in Australia have grappled with not dissimilar questions and have come up with not dissimilar solutions. The Child Support Act in Australia has been drawn on by the Government to some extent. So far, so good, but the practice is crucial. This is where I and many others both within and outside the House are very concerned to make sure that, even at this stage, the practice through these regulations is improved so that it matches the fairness of the principle.

There are two concerns. The first has been articulated already: the reduction of benefit where the single mother refuses to name the absent father. We know—this is my figure, anyway, from York university—that, in about 5 per cent. of cases where there is currently refusal, violence is cited as the factor. I believe that, rather than make up regulations on their own, we can draw on the experience of other countries.

At the end of 1990, I had the opportunity to spend several days talking to Ministers, officials of the Department of Social Security, officials of the tax office and voluntary bodies in Australia about the child support scheme. I hope that our Department and our Child Support Agency will draw on this experience.

I should like to see one difference introduced here. It should not be for the official who decides whether a benefit should be given or withdrawn to grapple also with the sensitive issue of violence. Within the Department of Social Security in Australia, the task is given to social workers. An internal memorandum highlighting the guidelines contains the following statement:

> "If clients refuse or are reluctant to take action to receive child support, it may be appropriate for them to be referred to the social worker for consideration as to whether they should be exempt from taking action."

Later on, the memorandum says:

> "The reason for involving social workers in the exemption process is to ensure that a professional assessment of sensitive and complex circumstances is available."

It cannot be right that the official, who may be aware of agency targets to recoup certain amounts of money, is also the person grappling with these issues.

**Mr. Burt** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Wicks:** The Minister shakes his head, and I should like his reassurance later that social workers and other people trained in this area will be involved in the process.

In Australia, at the end of 1989-90, 2 per cent. of cases were exempted because of violence, and there was a total of 14 per cent. So there is experience there to draw on, and I hope that the Government will draw on it.

The second concern has to be the lack of disregard for lone mothers on income support. To describe the whole process as a strategy of "children come first" is, in terms of implementation, a policy non sequitur. There is a sense in which the Act is not a child support Act but an Exchequer support Act. It cannot be right that the vast majority—this is no exaggeration, because the vast majority are on income support—will gain not a pound from what is meant to be a child support Act. The Minister cannot deny this and it has to be wrong.

The Australians told me that one reason why things worked so well over there was that the custodial parents knew that they would be gaining financially from the Act. The Australian tax office, which administers the scheme —it would be far better if our Inland Revenue had taken that responsibility—says that the mothers had a real interest in how the scheme worked. The office expected to be deluged by calls from fathers moaning about the scheme, but in fact the phones kept ringing with mothers asking how the scheme was coming along and when they would get their share of child support. The tax office said that the ability to share out the proceeds of child support among the parents, the children and the state was crucial to the working of the scheme.

I therefore believe that the child support scheme is at something of a crossroads, and I hope that there is still time for wiser counsels to prevail. At present, I repeat, most of our children affected by this will not gain financially; children will not come first. That is the reality that cannot be denied. Therefore, there is a genuine concern—I speak as a supporter of the overall strategy of parental responsibility in the changing family circumstances of the 1990s—that this will now be type-cast as yet another mean-minded measure from a Government who put money first.

That would be a great pity, and I urge Ministers to think again, as they have time to do. The principle of parental responsibility, allied to measures of child care and training and employment for lone-parent families, alongside child maintenance, could give us the chance to fashion a decent piece of social policy—decent because it would be based on sound moral philosophy.

**Several Hon. Members** *rose*——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** I must advise the House that the winding-up speeches will begin at a quarter to 8. It appears that four hon. Members wish to catch my eye, and if they will bear that in mind, I hope that it will be possible to call them all.

7.28 pm

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I will try to stay within those constraints, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could speak for an hour and a half on the regulations because in a previous incarnation I was a provincial solicitor working in a town in my constituency dealing with divorce law. I learned a great deal there and I recognise many of the problems which the regulations try to tackle, and I certainly support them in principle.

The Minister is a compassionate man. He is a new Minister and I am afraid that he has been given a difficult brief this evening, because the regulations are technically complex. If I had had more time, I would have added my voice and weight to the discussion on that question. The primary legislation is an enabling Act with far-reaching secondary legislative powers. I think that this is an abuse and I hope that when the Minister has a bit more experience he will tell the officials in the Box behind him that he needs a bit more time before he can bring such measures to the House. We all live and learn in this place and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take that advice in the spirit in which it is intended.

The Act and the regulations do not live in the real world, because people do not easily absent themselves from their children. There are always complex psychological and emotional reasons for the parting of the ways. One is not dealing with rational people, in the case of divorced couples who have left their offspring behind. Sixty per cent. of the time, divorce settlements—which involve custody and maintenance determined by the courts—are difficult to arrange.

The regulations provide a rational civil service solution to highly charged situations. Some people use their children as weapons against their former spouses. I have seen that occur time and again. I do not have the time to detail all my reservations, but my main concern is that the regulations will cause distress far in excess of any financial benefit that they may bring—even to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They will disrupt not only the family of the caring parent but the second family as well.

Absent spouses—mainly fathers—will demand access to their children, some of whom they will not have seen for many years. That will cause great distress to the children. Suppose that the caring parent has reached the conclusion that disclosing information about the absent parent will lead to an application for access—which would distress the children. Would the mother be protected, as the Minister said earlier, because no other corroboration was needed to meet the regulations' non-disclosure requirements? Would it be enough for the mother to say, "My two infants will be considerably distressed if an access application is granted"? Would that be sufficient to avoid having to make the disclosures that the regulations stipulate?

**Mr. Burt:** I remind the hon. Gentleman that whether or not an access application succeeds is a matter for the court to decide—bearing in mind that the court will put the interests of the child first. An application for access might come at any time, and for any reason. It will not necessarily be connected with a maintenance request. The two are decided entirely separately.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** I understand that the court has jurisdiction in respect of custody, and the Minister is right to say that an access application can be made at any time. However, where a couple have split and lead independent family existences, the children who are in the custody of the caring parent may have no connection with the estranged and absent father. Nevertheless, the courts rightly take a jealous view of a father's right to have access to his natural child. All other factors being equal, the court may make an order. However, we are discussing the woman's judgment of whether access will distress her family to the extent that she is entitled to refuse making a disclosure.

I say with all the sincerity that I can muster in four and a half minutes that that, for me, that is the crucial issue. If a woman cannot, with her hand on her heart—and in the absence of any corroborating evidence—decline disclosure without question, the regulations will give rise to tremendous turmoil and upheaval the full length and breadth of the land.

I am concerned also about the draft Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992. I was teasing the Minister earlier about regulations that I do not really understand, but these regulations confer a fantastically widely drawn power on an inspector appointed under section 50 of the Child Support Act 1991, who can enter any premises for the purposes of exercising any powers conferred on him by that section. Regulations 2, 7, and 8 go much further in conferring administrative powers on officials to enforce the provisions of the 1991 Act.

I am nervous about the far-ranging nature of those powers. If I had longer, I could persuade the Minister that they are very dangerous. I hope that he will respond to those points when he winds up.

7.35 pm

**Ms. Dawn Primarolo** (Bristol, South): I will make only two points, because I am anxious that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) should also be able to contribute. It is outrageous that complicated regulations that will so upset many women's lives must be debated in only one and a half hours. The regulations claim to have their origin in a document entitled "Children Come First", when the rationale for the proposals is to save money for the Department of Social Security.

Children are living in poverty if their single parents are claiming social security, and when the regulations are in force they will still live in poverty. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, not one penny will go to the single parent unless that parent exceeds the income support level—in which case, the other parent might be forced into poverty.

I am not against the proposition in principle that parents should take responsibility for their children, but the regulations are based on prejudice, and they will interfere in the lives of single parents. They also confuse the legal process with the punitive provisions that can be dispensed under social security legislation.

The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) spoke of the access rights of the absent father and said that, once maintenance was agreed, they could be reassessed. That

brings us to the heart of the regulations. Absent parents —fathers—who are forced to make payments will equate them with access or other rights over the mother and her children. The regulations will not only leave the single parent family in poverty but place them at risk of the actions of an aggrieved absent parent. If the courts are failing to make sensible maintenance arrangements, it is for the courts and the Government to correct that situation through family law, not social security law.

The explanatory notes, which were available only at the beginning of this debate, say that, under part I of the draft Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992, a notice will be sent when an application for maintenance has been received. It will not be an application for maintenance but a disclosure of the father's name under the threat that, in the absence of that disclosure, benefit will be deducted. That will immediately place the woman and her children at risk. The woman will have no grounds to defend herself, complain, or seek legal redress against an absent father who may pursue her by means of, for example, a molestation order. Nor will she be entitled even to make such an application, because the couple will have lived apart for a certain length of time.

The regulations give rights of access and ownership, at least in the mind of the absent parent, with no defence or appeal mechanism available to the woman. Their position will become worse rather than better.

My next point relates to the regulations. According to the explanatory note, regulation 5 informs the absent father that an application has been made, not that his name has been forced out of the mother. The regulation then lays down the penalties that will be imposed on the father as a result of the disclosure of his name by the mother, if he does not himself disclose all the information that the Department requires. Such action will lead to the building up of aggravation and resentment. The Government claim that they are legislating to put children first, but it seems to me that the lowest priority of the proposals is putting children first, and that their main priority is putting the Government first and saving them money. The proposals will do nothing to enhance parents' responsibility for maintenance and everything to weaken and endanger the position of single parents.

I have no time to go into the details of the regulations. Let me make it clear, however, that the legislation is wrong. The statutory instruments are fatally flawed, and women will suffer yet again.

7.40 pm

**Ms. Ann Coffey** (Stockport): Let me remind the Minister of another piece of legislation, the Children Act 1989. Social security legislation and personal services legislation are entangled with each other. On the one hand, we have the Children Act, which is designed to enable parents to go on undertaking their parental responsibilities —one hopes, outside the legislative framework—and to make private arrangements that suit them, benefit their children and are seen as non-prescriptive and flexible. Most people in social services departments were happy with those arrangements; they especially welcomed their non-prescriptive and flexible nature. On the other hand, we have a piece of social security legislation that is extremely prescriptive. Its implementation will impinge on the possibility of the Children Act's being implemented in the way that was intended.

I am sure that the Minister is well aware of the close connection between poverty and children going into care. As many Opposition Members have pointed out, the legislation will simply bring about a redistribution of poverty; it will not raise any family's standard of living. I am worried about the way in which the 1991 Act will impinge on private arrangements.

I sometimes wonder whether those who introduce such legislation appreciate the day-to-day life styles of the people who will be on the receiving end. For example, a woman wishing to protect an informal access arrangement might tell an interrogator from the Child Support Agency that she did not know the whereabouts of the father. That could lead to a repetition of the situation that arose under the cohabitation rules: DSS officers will start investigating people's circumstances to find out whether they are telling the truth. Will there be child support officers with binoculars in parks, trying to identify fathers with small children so that they can slap a maintenance order on them?

The Minister said that there were a good many caveats and discretionary powers, but DSS officers are very efficient. They have to be. I am sure that they will pursue the objective that has been set for them and try to collect as much maintenance money as they can to decrease the amount that is spent on benefit. No officer is going to say to a parent, "Tell me your personal circumstances. How helpful and understanding can I be?" That is not the rule; the rule tells DSS officers to collect the money.

The Minister may believe that he is making plenty of discretionary arrangements to ensure that everyone is treated with respect, but, because of the prescriptive nature of the legislation, that will not actually happen. Does he really want thousands of women to be subjected to humiliating procedures so that he can recover a few million pounds by taking the clothes off children's backs and the food out of their mouths?

If the Minister is seriously interested in children's welfare, and in ensuring that families have the income to support those children, I urge him to look carefully at the legislation. As it stands, it does nothing to dispel poverty or to improve the welfare of children, and it humiliates hundreds of our citizens.

7.45 pm

**Mr. Burt:** I have enjoyed the debate. I have heard some extremely good speeches, and some to which I prefer not to respond because they are not worth it.

We are trying to provide a better basis for the recovery of child maintenance, both now and in the future. Where benefit is currently doing the father's job, it is not the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Department of Social Security who are paying out but millions of ordinary fathers and mothers who are paying taxes so that they can be used for the benefit of other people's children. Fathers retain a responsibility, and I believe that when they have the money to support their children it is right for them to do so. Most people believe the same, and that principle was accepted by the House. I have rarely known the Opposition Front Bench to accept the principles of an act so candidly and straightforwardly. I have also rarely heard so many Back-Bench comments which seemed to deny not only the principle of what we were trying to do, but its limited acceptance by those on the Front Bench.

*[Mr. Burt]*

I will deal again with the difficult point about mothers and potential benefit deductions. We are talking about, potentially, a very small minority of mothers who might refuse to give the fathers' names. I have tried to make it clear that, if they fear harm or undue distress, mothers will not be required to give those names. The dictionary definition of harm is to hurt, injure or damage; the definition of distress is to subject to severe strain or pressure, to cause pain or anxiety to, or to afflict, vex or make miserable. Those definitions strike the Government as wide enough to embrace all genuine cases in which we would not wish to pursue the question of child maintenance.

**Mr. Keith Bradley** (Manchester, Withington): In a written answer on 22 June, the Minister said:

"Suitable and comprehensive training and guidance will be given to staff of the Child Support Agency to ensure that this sensitive area of work is handled professionally and sympathetically."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 87.]

As the Minister wishes to reassure us on that score, will he publish the guidelines that will be given to staff, so that Parliament is aware of them and other agencies dealing with the matter are well briefed on how it should be handled?

**Mr. Burt:** I am sure that the question of training will be made entirely clear. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will visit the Child Support Agency and see for himself what is being done. As for the publication of guidelines, we are anxious not to provide a charter for some fathers to evade their responsibilities.

To try to deal with the concerns expressed about appeals, I will run through precisely what the process will be. The Child Support Agency will contact the parent with care and discuss the reasons why the parent feels unable to co-operate in obtaining maintenance. We shall make clear the ways in which the agency can help by acting as a buffer, making all contacts and collecting the maintenance. There is no question of passing on an address. A six-week cooling-off period will give the parent with care the opportunity to comply or to make further representations, in which she may be supported by outside help.

We shall consider whether there would be a risk of harm or undue distress. If so, the matter will not be pressed. If we are not satisfied that the parent has good grounds for not co-operating, the case will be referred to a child support officer for further consideration. There will then be a further two-week period in which to comply or make representations. If, at the end of that period, the child support officer is not satisfied, a reduced benefit direction will be issued. At that stage, the opportunity to appeal to a child support tribunal for independent assessment comes into play. Therefore, there are several opportunities for the situation to be made clear to the mother.

**Mr. Kirkwood** *rose*——

**Mr. Burt:** I dare not give way. We are running out of time and there are too many measures to discuss in detail.

I enjoyed the contribution of the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) who referred to Australia. In Labour Australia, the benefit reduction is total. All personal benefit is removed from the mother where there is no co-operation. That is the news in Labour Australia, but I do not think that we should like to see it here. Perhaps it makes what we are doing seem a bit more reasonable.

The provisions are designed to create a new arrangement for the maintenance of children. It is not done with the interests of the Exchequer in mind, but with the aim of providing a basis and platform of maintenance and support. Mothers who are on maintenance and benefit now may not want to remain so in the future. This gives them a better chance——

*It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings, pursuant to Order [25 June].*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Child Support (Maintenance Assessment Procedure) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Child Support (Maintenance Assessments and Special Cases) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Child Support (Information, Evidence and Disclosure) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenance Assessments) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 22nd June, be approved.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

## Council Tax Benefit

7.51 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt):** I beg to move,

That the draft Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

Madam Speaker—I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That just goes to show what having a hard day can do.

These regulations, which I commend to the House, introduce a comprehensive system to help people on low incomes meet their council tax liability. The scheme is comprehensive in two senses. First, the new benefit will provide rebates of up to 100 per cent. of council tax liability. I am sure that the House will welcome this and the fact that under the council tax there will be no minimum contribution. Further, as my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Social Security announced last November, the additional amounts included in the income-related benefits to help towards the 20 per cent. minimum contribution towards the community charge will not be clawed back on the introduction of the new tax. That will be very good news for about 8 million people and it is evidence of the Government's commitment to protect, and indeed improve, the position of those on the lowest incomes. By April next year, income-related benefits will be nearly £700 million more than would have been required to compensate for inflation since 1989.

The benefit scheme will be comprehensive in another sense. The regulations have been designed to mirror the liability and discount arrangements of the council tax itself. They will therefore ensure that rebates reflect precisely changes in liability to the new tax. The council tax benefit scheme will be operated by billing and levying authorities, and benefit will usually be awarded by rebating the liable person's council tax bill. We expect that the new scheme will help around 5 million people.

The regulations provide for two distinct types of benefit. First, main council tax benefit will help liable persons on low incomes to pay the council tax. Secondly, the alternative benefit, or second adult rebates, will provide help to a liable person where others living in his home on a non-commercial basis are on a low income.

Before I go through the regulations in greater detail, I should explain that the Government's objective has been to maintain alignment with the other income-related benefits wherever practicable. The benefit scheme therefore builds on the reformed system of income-related benefits which the Government introduced in 1988. In particular, it retains the same procedures for assessing capital, net weekly income and applicable amounts, and for determining claims and reviews.

There is general agreement that the aligned rules have several advantages. They make it easier to understand and to claim benefit. They are also helpful to local authorities which administer housing benefit and will administer council tax benefit, since they ensure that changes to the rebate system can be kept to the absolute minimum. Main council tax benefit therefore follows closely the structure of the existing community charge and housing benefit schemes, and the rate of benefit will be calculated in a similar way.

First, the capital resources of those claiming will be considered. We believe that, if people have access to significant amounts of capital, they should be expected to use some of it reasonably in meeting their necessary expenses before claiming income-related benefits. In line with the current arrangements under community charge benefit and housing benefit, the upper capital limit will be £16,000 and the first £3,000 of a person's capital will be disregarded completely.

Next, the net weekly income will be calculated. The assessment of income under council tax benefit will follow the normal rules in income-related benefits, and will include tariff income on any capital between £3,000 and £16,000.

I recognise that many hon. Members of all parties are concerned abut the tariff income rule which ensures that the income-related benefits take capital into account. It may be helpful if I say something about it, as I receive and sign many letters about it. The system was devised only after a comprehensive consultation exercise before the reformed system of social security was introduced in 1988. The system has several advantages. It ensures that help is focused on those who need it most while not denying benefit to those with modest amounts of capital.

The arrangements are more straightforward operationally and avoid the difficulties that can arise where actual income from capital is taken into account. They include, for example, the need to assess interest, which is often paid twice-yearly, on a weekly basis. Also, some might maximise their benefit unfairly by placing their savings in an account which pays no interest. Tariff income therefore does not imply any particular rate of interest but is merely a way of tapering off benefit to take account of higher levels of savings. Having considered the matter seriously since I have been in this post, I believe that the system we have is the best that can be devised.

A person's personal circumstances will be taken into account, using the same applicable amounts, made up of personal allowances and premiums, as are now used in housing benefit and community charge benefit. Main council tax benefit will again follow housing benefit in applying non-dependant deductions from maximum benefit. The Government believe that it is reasonable to assume that non-dependants sharing a household on a non-commercial basis with someone in receipt of benefit should make some contribution to the council tax. The benefit scheme therefore assumes that contributions are made and provides that these deductions will be nothing for those in receipt of income support, £1 a week for those not in full-time work or with an income less than prescribed amount, and just £2 a week for others. The deductions are relatively modest; the £2 deduction will be broadly equivalent to 25 per cent. of the average weekly council tax bill.

In calculating non-dependant deductions, any income from disability living allowance and attendance allowance will be completely disregarded, and I repeat that no non-dependant deductions will be made in respect of non-dependants who are in receipt of income support. Those with income at or below income support levels will be able to get help with up to 100 per cent. of their council tax bill, and for those with higher incomes, benefit will be withdrawn on the basis of a 20 per cent. taper.

The decision to have a 20 per cent. taper for council tax benefit strikes the right balance between ensuring that those with incomes just above income support levels

*[Mr. Alistair Burt]*

receive substantial help, while those with higher incomes receive slightly less. That is consistent with the Government's policy of directing benefit help to those people on the lowest incomes.

I now turn to an important innovation in the council tax benefit scheme—the alternative maximum council tax benefit or second adult rebates. As hon. Members will be aware, the council tax includes a system of discounts which help people living alone—for example, widowed mothers with children. The system will also help certain other groups, such as those who are severely mentally impaired, who were previously exempt from the community charge. The alternative maximum council tax benefit will ensure that persons who would otherwise have qualified for a discount will not be unduly penalised by the presence in their household of a person on low income.

A maximum 25 per cent. rebate will be awarded in respect of a second adult or second adults on income support. Lower levels of rebate will apply in respect of second adults with incomes above prescribed levels.

I will offer a brief example for clarification. Let us take the case of a liable person who has been living alone, but is then joined in her household by a person in receipt of income support who will be living there on a non-commercial basis. Until the arrival of this second person, the liable person would have qualified for a 25 per cent. personal discount. However, the arrival of the second adult in the household will have the effect of increasing council tax liability from 75 per cent. to 100 per cent. Given that the new arrival is on income support, he cannot be expected to contribute to the liable person's council tax bill. Therefore, a second adult rebate may be awarded to compensate for the increase in the bill. In our example, the second adult, being on income support, will attract the maximum second adult rebate of 25 per cent., thus restoring the position to what it was before the arrival.

I now turn to the regulations themselves. In explaining them to the House, I do not intend to impose on right hon. and hon. Members a blow-by-blow account of each and every paragraph of the regulations, although I know that that is a disappointment to those present. For the purpose of brevity, the regulations may be viewed as falling into two sections. The first section included parts I and V, which set out the general rules governing the treatment of income and capital under the council tax benefit scheme. Those parts also detail the rules applying to specific groups of people, such as self-employed earners and students. I should also include here parts VII and XII of the regulations, which set out the general provisions for implementing the scheme, including the rules on determining claims to benefit. All regulations closely follow the provisions currently applying to the housing benefit and community charge benefit schemes.

The second broad section comprises part VI of the regulations, which covers those aspects which provide specifically for the particular structure of the council tax system. It is in part VI that we find for example, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) knows well, regulation 51, which provides for benefit to be awarded up to 100 per cent. of council tax liability, and the regulations that provide for non-dependant deductions. Also in part VI are the regulations that introduce the alternative maximum council tax benefit or second adult rebate, with regulation 54 and schedule 2 setting out the rules which ensure that a liable person who shares his accommodation with people on low incomes can receive help towards his council tax bill.

In commending the regulations to the House, I should like to make it clear that they were subject to formal consultations with the local authority associations. During our consultations, many helpful comments and suggestions were made by the associations, for which the Government are extremely grateful, and a number of those are reflected in the final regulations before the House. For example, amendments on the processing of claims to benefit and the treatment of students during the long summer vacation were suggested by the associations and have been included in the regulations.

I stress that we do not underestimate the need to ensure that those currently receiving community charge benefit move readily from it to council tax benefit, or the need to help local authorities in their task of implementing the new scheme. To that end, we will introduce a number of special arrangements to facilitate the introduction of the scheme. They will be prescribed in the Council Tax Benefit (Transitional) Order 1992, which we intend should be made and laid before the House as soon as the benefit regulations are approved. The arrangements have already been discussed with local authority associations and have met with their broad approval. The provisions will allow for important easements during the transition to council tax.

An important feature of the transitional order is that it will protect the position of people who, although liable on 1 April 1993, do not immediately claim council tax benefit. That will be achieved by providing that claims that are made within 56 days of 1 April or within 56 days of the person receiving his first council tax bill will be treated as if they had been made on 1 April.

The transitional arrangements will also enable local authorities to waive claims for council tax benefit from people already in receipt of housing benefit or community charge benefit. That will remove the necessity for people to submit new claims for the new benefit and will substantially reduce work loads for authorities during the changeover.

I am sure that the House will welcome the regulations as offering a comprehensive system of support to those who may face difficulties in discharging their council tax liability. The regulations will offer particular help to those on income support who will gain not only from the introduction of the maximum 100 per cent. benefit, but from our decision not to claw back the amount previously included in income support rates to meet the minimum contribution to the community charge.

Help will also be extended to those who, although not on low income themselves, share their households with others of limited means. I am also certain that, by aligning the new benefit scheme as far as possible with the existing income-related benefit administered by local authorities, the implementation of the council tax will be eased. On that basis, I commend the regulations to the House.

8.4 pm

**Mr. Graham Allen** (Nottingham, North): I am pleased to appear for the first time in the House with the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. The previous occasion on which I appeared with him was at Wembley

when we were raising money for charity in a football game. On that occasion, as the Minister broke through with the ball, I emerged from the goal and, diving bravely at his feet, managed to save the honour of my team. I hope that that is the last time I shall be at the Minister's feet, but who knows with talent such as his?

**Mr. Burt:** The hon. Gentleman may live in hope.

**Mr. Allen:** We are now considering the benefit side of son of poll tax—the council tax—which was introduced to save the Government's bacon after the demise of the former right hon. Member for Finchley. Should I say right hon. Lady? I must get my terms right. I do not know whether I should change the term I use, because I believe that the right hon. Lady is in the other place from today —[HON. MEMBERS: "The noble Lady."] The noble Lady. However she is now titled, it is true to say that she was well and truly trussed up and cooked by the present Prime Minister and his colleagues. One thing that he did to resurrect the hopes of the Conservative party was to do away with—or attempt to do away with as well as he could —the poll tax. The council tax has taken its place and in many ways the regulations are the attempt to mitigate the worse effects of the council tax on those on low incomes.

What I find most objectionable is that the provisions are brought before the House in this form. My understanding is that when the Local Government Finance Bill was in Committee there was little discussion about the benefits side. That may have been due to some problems in Committee or to the farcical nature of the Committee stage to which we all adhere. However, there was no excuse for not having serious consideration of what are often technical matters, but nevertheless matters that affect millions of people, as the Minister pointed out.

There were failings in Committee and it is also a failing that the matter has not been reported to the Social Security Advisory Committee. I am well aware of the technical caveat that six months must elapse after the passage of the legislation before a matter can be referred to the committee, but I should have thought that on this occasion, if no other, a series of regulations of such complexity and importance would have benefited from the committee's expert eye.

I readily concede to the Minister that local authority associations have been involved and that other bodies have made representations. Hon. Members have also made representations. However, not being able to go to the Social Security Advisory Committee underlines the fact that the way in which governmental processes work—especially, in my experience, in this area—is not a great credit to our democracy. The regulations are one item before the House for a debate of one and a half hours, although they are jam-packed with stuff—no doubt excellent stuff. Our democracy is not served by items of such width and importance being put to the House for a one-and-a-half-hour debate.

We need to get on with the reality, so we need to make a few points on the regulations because of their effect from 1 April 1993 on people on low incomes. I was immediately struck by the complicated nature of the council tax benefit system. No doubt, part of the reason for its complexity is that it is trying to be a poll tax and a property tax at the same time. However, there is evidence of additional and unnecessary complications in the regulations. In that regard, local authorities will have to send out net bills that are calculated in advance. That will involve extensive procedures, registration—the use of registers, or whatever we want to call them—canvassing households and assessments. There will effectively be a record of everyone in a household and possibly details of their incomes as well.

After many years of sloganising about simplifying the social security system, the Government have had an opportunity to act with the regulations, but they missed that chance. The poll tax benefit system is already so cumbersome and detailed that up to 20 per cent. of assessments may be inaccurate. Some 20 per cent. of claims may result in over-payment or under-payment. We should improve on that record. I hope that the Minister, in his new capacity, will keep an eye on that. I hope that, through internal monitoring in his Department, he will try to ensure that that failure rate improves. That may require not just his eagle eye but resources directed to the right places in local authorities.

The Opposition welcome the 100 per cent. rebates. However, the rebates raise several questions. It is possible that councils will continue not to be reimbursed fully when they pay the rebates. I understand that the current level is about 97 per cent., although no doubt eminent local government practitioners will correct that figure if I am wrong.

It would be useful if the Minister were at some point to clarify whether the 97 per cent. reimbursement from Government to councils through the council tax will be maintained. Some of my more cynical colleagues are suspicious that that 97 per cent. figure will be reduced, particularly when expenditure pressure is brought to bear on the Department of Social Security. No doubt the Secretary of State will vigorously resist that pressure.

With regard to the rebates, we must also consider the element to assist payment of the poll tax which is currently contained in income support. I understand that that element will be preserved and I welcome that. However, as I am perhaps unduly suspicious, the Minister might reassure us that the element in income support will continue to be paid in future and that it will not be frozen as a way of recouping money to the Exchequer. I hope that it will not be reduced in the next uprating or in any uprating in future. *[Interruption.]* I am pleased that the Minister agrees that that is unlikely to happen. Even though I have great faith in him, I hope that he will carry that message to those people who are even more eminent than he is.

The possible cost saving if that element is removed is £680 million. Even if the Minister stands very firm, he and his colleagues may find that sum far too tempting a prospect and they may try to reduce the expenditure that is devoted to that scheme at the moment. It sounds like a large global scheme, but it breaks down to £1·40 for a single person on income support and £2·80 for a couple. That may not sound very much in the House, but for people on income support it is often the difference between having a square meal and not having one.

As a result of experience and practice over the years, the Minister may wish to consider whether there should be changes to the regulations in respect of the taper. He is aware that, as income increases, council tax benefit will be withdrawn at 20p in the pound, as opposed to 15p in the pound under the poll tax benefit. That would account for a saving of £60 million. I intend to show how that relatively small amount could be reallocated to the taper

*[Mr. Allen]*

so that the taper is more generous and people are not hit so hard as they try to get back to work and their marginal rates of taxation are kept as low as possible.

Withdrawal rates are a major contribution to the poverty trap. They combine with extra taxation and national insurance to create effective marginal tax rates of some 97 per cent. I hope that no hon. Member believes that that is acceptable.

Some people will receive less in council tax benefits than they have received under poll tax benefits or rate rebates. Many of those people are not on the absolute minimum levels of income. They may have small amounts of income from occupational pension funds or they may be in very low-paid work. I hope that the Government will consider those people over the next few years as they re-examine the way in which the scheme is working, with an eye to looking once again at the taper. That might be extremely important, not least to help people in hardship and difficult times, but also with the aim, which I hope all hon. Members share, of getting people back to work without penalising them unduly as their incomes increase.

Perhaps the most serious concern for the Opposition is the single person discount. The discount does not seem to fit easily into the structure of benefits. Single people will qualify for a 25 per cent. discount on bills. As the Minister explained, the second adult in a home will, if on low income, also entitle the liable person to a 25 per cent. rebate.

That benefit has all the makings of a real administrative nightmare. The liable person will have to provide highly detailed information so that a decision can be taken between a personal rebate and one for the second adult. We must consider whether everyone in that situation will be equipped to provide the details. Some very confused forms could be returned to local council offices by people who are not literate or who do not understand how the system works.

A liable person will have to ask detailed questions about the personal income of the second adult. The second adult may be unwilling to provide that information and may even refuse to give it. Administrative tinkering might produce some benefits, not least for the individual, but also for the Department and, above all, for councils which may need to implement the policies.

The council tax benefit in that area is user-hostile. It may also lead to serious problems with take-up. Individuals may feel that the whole process is just too much for them. The form-filling exercise and the details requested about their personal circumstances and those of second adults may be too much to go through. Heaven only knows what the form looks like. I do not know whether there are draft forms available, but I hope that the consultations about that form will be as wide as those held for the disability living and working allowance form. I am sure that the form would benefit from some filleting so that the required information is given and ascertaining that information is made as easy as possible. In that way, the form could be processed easily.

The Minister could also do the House and the public a great service by letting us know what publicity and advice will be available when the council tax benefit scheme is to be implemented. I hope that he will make a few remarks about that in his reply.

It is equally important that the individuals who have to fill out the forms, the people who process them at council level and people in the Department are all properly equipped so that the difficulties which are bound to arise can be handled speedily and sensitively.

Expensive revisions will be necessary whenever the income of a liable person or the people living with that person changes. That is another administrative problem. The scope for re-billing and recalculating rebates will be immense. The leeway for under-payment and over-payment, to which I referred in the context of the poll tax, will be massive. The consequent hardship for those on benefit could be great. I hope that the Government will examine the matter carefully.

The proposed scheme is in danger of drowning in a morass of detail, not least that of the daily liability scheme under which it operates. I hope that the Government will consider carefully how the scheme moves forward. I am leaving aside the huge increase in the workload which local authorities will have to undertake. That has been the subject of letters from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of London Authorities which the Minister will undoubtedly have seen.

Local authority council tax benefit services could be forced to work out the best deal for each and every case. Cases may not slot neatly into the computerised programs. That would lead to incredible amounts of additional work which would need to be funded one way or another by the local authority. That is a matter of great anxiety. In many ways, the additional workload is avoidable. The 25 per cent. single person discount is a throwback to the poll tax. Unlike rate rebates, it is not related to ability to pay.

The very costs of the single person discount distort the rebate system and could lead to the rebate system being underfunded. If the discount system costs £780 million, that is £780 million which will not go to produce a more sensible and planned rebate system such as we should like to see.

Joint and several liability is greatly extended by the regulations. It simply means that someone living at home but not named on the council tax bill can be liable for arrears. Thus, any individual who appears in the hierarchy of liability can become liable for the whole council tax bill but may be in receipt of only part of a rebate. The position is far worse than under the poll tax, when liability extended only to the husband or wife. Of course, under the rates, only the householder was liable.

The Minister referred to non-dependant deductions. Under the council tax benefit system, it will be assumed that contributions to the council tax will be met by grown-up children, elderly relatives and others who are referred to as non-dependants. But we all know that in many cases that just does not happen. That assumption could discourage the sharing of accommodation. Again, the Minister may wish to consider talking to his colleagues at the Department of Health and elsewhere about how the system ties in with the Government's approach to community care. We may place an obstacle in the way of people who might otherwise share accommodation. Even for the sake of a few pounds, households could be broken up. That will place more stress and pressure on caring services in the community.

The regulations are an effort to reconcile a property-based on rates-based tax with a person-based poll tax as well as the two benefits systems that flow from them. They may be irreconcilable. One system may have to

come out on top. I hope that we do not remain the prisoner of the internal battle which led to the creation of the halfway house of the council tax. I welcome the Minister's tenure at the Department of Social Security. I hope that before he moves on to even higher things he will be able to move the system one step forward to where I want it to be —to a rebate system. I hope that the property-based system will come out on top. That will happen at some time. I hope that the Minister's legacy will be to have returned us to a sensible rates-based system.

8.25 pm

**Sir Paul Beresford** (Croydon, Central): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to address the House briefly on a complicated but, despite what we have just heard, non-controversial set of regulations. When I was assembling my thoughts for this, my maiden speech, I chanced to hear that my predecessor had quietly asked at the back door for a copy of my utterances in *Hansard*. That gave me the opportunity to do the same for him and I collected a copy of his maiden speech. It was intriguing, because a large portion of his opening remarks were spent on congratulating our current Madam Speaker, who had recently assumed a different role. Chivalry, which is something that my accent usually finds difficult, suggests that I should not mention any times or dates—and chivalry was certainly a characteristic which stood out in John Moore.

John Moore had a successful career in the House and in Government. He was a Minister at the Department of Energy, at the Treasury, at the Department of Transport and at the Department of Health, where his own health let him down. As his name was mentioned on a recent list, he faces the prospect of making his maiden speech in another place fairly soon.

Having spent almost a year knocking on doors in the constituency of Croydon, Central, I have learnt two things: first, my predecessor was an excellent, well liked, popular, hard-working constituency Member of Parliament; secondly, Croydon, Central is a delightful area in which to live. Most people see Croydon as a mini-Manhattan. It has concrete tower blocks and concrete arcades but there is much more to it. Although Croydon recently failed in its bid to become a city, it has been a town of independent standing for about 1,000 years.

Croydon is much more than a mini-Manhattan. Croydon, Central has leafy glades and a delightful urban dormitory area which predominantly serves London. It finishes with a picturesque council estate largely set among farm land. As an early citizen of Croydon, John Ruskin, said:

"Things modest, humble and pure in peace under the low red roofs of Croydon".

Croydon, Central is one of the four constituencies served by an excellent, well known and successful Conservative council. Since the demise of the Greater London council, it has been a unitary authority or, as some of the old hands of Croydon would say, a county borough. The council is one of relatively few London councils, all Conservative, which follow value for money.

The council is less paternalistic and traditional nowadays. It recognises the need for value for money and quality services. I raise that point because it has been long forgotten that the greatest benefit to the poorest among us is not so much the level of benefits available as the low level of the full charge for quality services. Some of us have a little experience of that. One London Conservative council, which has almost the lowest level of external support per head of population in inner London, has produced some of the best-quality services, and for two years has had a zero poll tax. That really brings benefit to the poor.

Croydon, with its lower needs, has obviously received lower grant. Nevertheless, it has a long history of low rates and low community charge, but quality and value-for-money services. I anticipate the same from Croydon, under Conservative control, with the council tax.

A small proportion of Croydon's population will need help—hence the regulations, which are bewilderingly complex and wide-ranging. I am surprised that some of the papers have not noted that the regulations cover haemophilia, which has exercised minds in magazines recently, and also polygamous marriages.

We must congratulate the Government because they have taken the benefits of the two previous systems—the rates and the community charge—and have learnt from some of their mistakes. One simple example is that students are now exempt. I felt that it was non-productive and bureaucratic to charge them under the community charge system. It was pointless for local councils to chase them, but they had to, due to pressure from the auditors.

Congratulations are also in order for the "second adult" rebate. Because of the complexities, local authorities have commented on that aspect, but I hope and anticipate that that system will continue as it is important for family health and for community care.

I want further progress in two other areas. I should not have thought that it was beyond the wit of man, although it seems to be beyond the wit of most councils, to collect information for council tax benefits in such a way that council tax discount cases will automatically be flagged up. Because of my doubts about local authorities, I hope that the two Ministers—in the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security—could more easily organise that than the councils could perceive the possibilities. The benefit for the councils would be immense.

As a past practitioner, I know that local authorities should be using publicity. It is for their ultimate benefit in keeping down arrears, and for the ultimate benefit of the public whom they are supposed to be there to serve, and so often they fail.

Secondly, I hope that central Government will continue to press councils, perhaps using the citizens charter—if need be, even to force them—to produce better services for less cost. The result would be of more value to British citizens than books of regulations and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money spent on benefits.

8.32 pm

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I hope that you will excuse my discourtesy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was checking up on the details of the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), whose speech I have listened to with great interest. It suddenly dawned on me that it was a maiden speech, and I was anxious to check on his constituency details so that I could welcome him in the customary fashion.

**Mr. Burt:** While sprinting back to the right Bench.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** Yes. That is the second time in my parliamentary career that that has happened to me. The first time was in 1983 when, a week after my maiden speech, I followed the former Member for York, Mr. Conal Gregory. I received my first note from the Speaker on that occasion—which caused me great angst—advising me that he was about to call me after Mr. Gregory and asking me to do the niceties and to observe the usual decencies, which I did in some haste and confusion.

I find myself in exactly the same position again. Notwithstanding that, I welcome the hon. Member for Croydon, Central, to the House. I am not an expert on local government, but I know enough to know that he is a great expert in his field. I am sure that he will bring great wisdom and knowledge to the House and we look forward to his contributions, although I hope that they will receive more recognition than my efforts in these few rushed comments. I listened to his speech with interest.

Obviously, the House will welcome elements of the regulations, not least the fact that the Government have recognised that a 100 per cent. rebate on the council tax is necessary, to avoid some of the worst financial impact, especially that suffered by families in hardship under the community charge system, when there was a ceiling on the rebate. I welcome that change unreservedly. It marks considerable progress, it will deal with many of the administrative difficulties and take much of that hardship out of the council tax rebate system.

Secondly, the Government could have argued with some logic that, as other benefits were increased because people were expected to pay a 20 per cent. contribution towards the community charge, the increase should have been clawed back, but they have not done so. That amounts to a considerable sum, and as claimants no longer have to make a 20 per cent. contribution, the Government could argue that they needed it back.

Those two changes are welcome. However, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) said that we must balance that against the high level at which the taper has been set. Although, the Government should be congratulated on not clawing back the 20 per cent. benefit increase. the taper is steep. There has been discussion about that and I know that the Government have considered it carefully. I want an assurance from the Minister that he will monitor that carefully during the introduction of the regulations, to satisfy himself that it does not cause undue hardship as it would be a shame if that where to occur.

People on my side of the political argument feel that it is difficult to set any property-based tax equipped with a sensitive rebate scheme. By definition, a property-based tax cannot be equated with ability to pay. In passing, I cannot resist saying that if the system were based on a local income tax, which was then used as a basis for generating local government finance, a rebate system and the monumental complexities that it embraces, as shown in the regulations, would be rendered unnecessary. There are better ways to do this. Having said that, the regulations introduce some improvements. For instance, I welcome rationalisation of the assessment systems which will make it easier for the council tax to be administered.

I did not hear the Minister refer to the fact that the Social Security Advisory Committee would have been asked to consider the regulations. I wonder whether the Committee raised any significant points about them. If so, perhaps the Minister will mention it in his winding-up speech.

I have several detailed questions. If the Minister cannot deal with them immediately, I should be pleased to receive written confirmation. There have been discussions, especially in the House of Lords, about the so-called "better-off" problem which could arise from the provisions under the regulations relating to joint and several liability. A bill could be levied against someone with joint and several liability who is not a spouse or part of another type of couple but one of several people living together. That person's name might not be on the bill, but he or she might qualify for a higher rebate than other partners in the household. I know that the Government have considered that problem, but it does not appear to have been resolved in the regulations. I know that it is a small technical point, but it would be helpful to learn the fruits of the Government's consideration.

Another better-off problem is that posed by the second-adult rebate. A complex problem could arise if a person was entitled to benefit under both routes, as set out in the regulations. I am not entirely sure whether that problem has been resolved. It would be helpful if the Minister could give me an answer.

On the wider political perspective, it would be helpful if the Minister could say what effect the regulations will have on those under 25—the regulations do not make that crystal clear. Greater consideration should be given to those in that age group. I know that this matter was discussed at length in the House of Lords and I wonder whether the Government have had any thoughts about how to mitigate the effects of the regulations on that age group, who will receive less council tax benefit than others. We should have a discussion about the social security provisions in general for that age group.

I am not clear how students can claim benefits under the regulations and I should be grateful for clarification about that.

I am interested in the interaction between the discount system and the rebate system. Council tax benefit will be awarded net of discounts. If that is true, there may be some difficulty for those on income support who receive 100 per cent. benefit, because discounts will make no difference to entitlement. Therefore, any discounts under the council tax will make no difference to them, but it will make a difference to those who administer the system. Problems and delays may occur if the discount is not automatically awarded before the bill is sent out. There will be problems if the local authority does not have some of the relevant information. Complications may occur for those on fluctuating incomes or whose circumstances change, which may affect their eligibility for discounts. Perhaps the Minister can tell us how the Government are thinking of rectifying those problems,

Although the new benefit system is welcomed, local government is concerned because it needs assistance and time to get the system up and running efficiently. What costs will be borne by the local authorities which supervise and implement the system? I understand that in some cases local authorities will have to use their own money to try to meet the costs of administering the benefit system that the regulations set up.

The Government will uprate the benefit and rebate levels each year. I am sure that the Minister's postbag, in common with those of many other hon. Members, is full

of letters expressing concern at the fact that water charges are now a tremendous problem for some people in some parts of the country. I know that the Government have to have regard to associated housing costs in the round when they consider the uprating provisions each year. Is there any way in which water charges could be added to the housing costs that the Government consider when deciding the upratings for the benefit and rebate systems? That could give some relief to those suffering significant increases in their water charges.

I welcome the regulations because they are a marked improvement on the original system. The Government have been generous in not seeking to claw back the 20 per cent. income support level increases. If the Minister is unable to answer the detailed points that I and other hon. Members have raised, we should be grateful for a written reply.

8.44 pm

**Mr. Burt:** My first task is to welcome warmly the maiden speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford). He has come to the House after pursuing a distinguished career in local government, which we all recognise. I was fortunate to visit Croydon the other day in connection with some of the social services provided there, and I formed a very favourable opinion of it.

The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about his predecessor, who was once involved with the Department of Social Security. He was a likeable man, with many friends. We are all pleased at his ennoblement, and we look forward to hearing from him many times in another place. My hon. Friend referred to Croydon as the Manhattan of southern England. With hyperbole like that, he will go a long way, and fit in easily with Government publications and speeches about Government policy. Long may he continue to spread the news of the benefits of his borough, which he has represented so well in many different ways in the past, and which he will undoubtedly represent well in the House. We wish him well.

I thank the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) for his kind remarks at the beginning of his speech. I look forward to working opposite him for some time to come. It was kind of him to remind the House of a previous occasion when we, together with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), were on the same football pitch at Wembley stadium, when the Members of Parliament representing the north of the country as a whole inflicted a considerable defeat on those representing the south. I can remember with tears in my eyes that moment when I slotted the ball home to score at Wembley. I do not think that I shall ever forget it.

There are times when tears come into my eyes when I look at Government policy, but that is the only connection between the two incidents. For the benefit of the Whips, I should add that that used to happen, but now I just shed tears of joy when I consider Government policy.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire raised a number of points, and I shall endeavour to cover most of them —if I cannot, I shall write to hon. Members. The hon. Member for Nottingham, North is right to say that we are not required to consult the Social Security Advisory Committee, which is the normal practice on regulations made within a fixed period of royal assent to a Bill. The hon. Gentleman was also right to say that we have consulted extensively with local authorities. However, a copy of the draft regulations was sent to the SSAC for information at the same time as those regulations were sent to the local authority associations for comment. No comments have been received from the SSAC.

Questions have been asked about the administration of the council tax benefit. We hope that, by aligning the benefit as closely as we can with housing benefit and community charge benefit, we have done our best to meet some of the concerns that were fairly expressed by local authority associations. We are all aware of the complexities that the previous scheme caused. We lived through them, and the local authorities worked through them. We felt that it was helpful to try to do what we could on alignment. We feel that we have done the best we could, but we shall watch the administration of the benefit carefully.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North asked about the 97 per cent. reimbursement—I should correct him: it is 95 per cent. reimbursement—that comes from the Government to local authorities. I understand that the remainder is found through the revenue support grant. The subsidy arrangements for the council tax benefit have yet to be finally determined, but I envisage that they will closely follow the current arrangements.

**Mr. Allen:** How does the Department currently monitor the performance of local authorities in terms of over and under-payment of poll tax benefit? Will the Minister keep an eye on the new procedures in relation to council tax benefit?

**Mr. Burt:** We monitor matters carefully from figures provided by local authorities. That monitoring will continue.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North went on to refer to the clawback and the suggestion that we might at some stage take back the money that has been put into income support. The same point was made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire. I assure them that I regard that money as having been put into income support for the future. That is Government policy, and it will now form an integral part of the benefit levels. We can all agree that that is good news.

Reference was made to the 20 per cent. taper. In all income-related benefits, the Government aim to target help to those who need it most. Under the council tax benefit, help will extend to people who have incomes above the income support level. It is widely agreed that it would be wrong for benefit to stop abruptly when income rises above income support levels. The taper means that, rather than facing the sudden cut-off of benefit, people with incomes above income support levels will see their benefit reduced on a sliding scale.

Those arrangements ensure that people with incomes just above income support levels can continue to receive substantial help with their council tax, while those on higher incomes receive proportionately less. That is consistent with Government policy of directing help to those on the lowest incomes who need it most.

It is of course true that the regulations set the council tax benefit taper at 20 per cent. compared with the 15 per cent. taper that currently applies under the community charge benefit. The taper is applied to income in excess of

*[Mr. Burt]*

the customer's income support level. For example, excess income of £10 per week will reduce benefit by £2 per week. Hon. Members who have been concerned about that should remember that the higher taper must be considered not in isolation, but in the context of the other considerable changes to the benefit system that the Government have announced.

The first 100 per cent. of maximum rebate will benefit all customers, including those with incomes above income support levels. In addition, all who are on benefit will gain from the Government's decision not to claw back any of the amounts included in income support levels to help with the 20 per cent. contribution under the community charge. Those amounts, as the House will recall, were added previously.

Taken overall, benefit entitlement under the new tax will extend to claimants with broadly the same levels of income as those helped by community charge benefit. That is why I say that the taper should not be taken in isolation. It is obviously a cost on the extra money that we have put into the benefit system to protect people, and it is not always possible to even things out as well as we would like; but I am convinced that the overall complex of the taper and the other benefits that have been put in—100 per cent. rebates and no clawback—is a good deal for those looking for assistance from council tax benefit.

**Mr. Allen:** Without wishing to go over old ground, I remind the Minister that the amount put aside for the single person's discount scheme is £580 million. When the council tax benefit begins to settle—as no doubt it will in the next year or so—there will undoubtedly be internal reviews on how money can be saved and reallocated. I am simply putting on the record the possibility that, when a review can take place, the Minister should look on the taper as one of the first items for review. As I pointed out, from a 20p in the pound taper to a 15p one costs £60 million. Considering that the Leader of the House is sitting immediately beside him—recalling that the right hon. Gentleman was renowned for his ability to shuffle the pack and, using the same cards, come up with a slightly better deal for those in need—the Minister, bearing that lesson in mind, may be able to reallocate the money towards a more helpful taper for those on low incomes.

**Mr. Burt:** I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I can add little to what I said about the way in which extra support has been put into benefit. There are many places where a small amount comparatively would appear to do a great deal of good, but add those apparently small sums around the system as a whole and one discovers just how much is involved. The hon. Gentleman pointed out what £580 million put into the system meant in terms of pounds per week. Imagine sitting on the Treasury Bench having to make such decisions all the time, right through the benefit system. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate what a bonus it has been to have had significant amounts put into income support and to have kept them there, so helping those for whom we are all extremely concerned.

The hon. Members for Nottingham, North and for Roxbrough and Berwickshire referred to the double tax consideration and asked whether people might be better off with the main council tax benefit or the alternative council tax benefit, the so-called "better buy" option. Which would be the best, they wondered.

Under the council tax benefit, a person cannot receive, at the same time, both the main benefit based on his own income and personal circumstances and the second adult rebate. Authorities must award whichever is the greater of the two amounts of benefit. The Government believe that the system of second adult rebates, which follows closely the arrangements for non-dependant deductions, will be relatively simple to operate.

The information that authorities will need to assess entitlement to either main benefit or second adult rebate will be collected on the benefit claim form. It will be the responsibility of the liable person to report changes in circumstances about second adult income. It will also be relatively easy to programme computers to compare the two amounts of benefit and award whichever is the greater.

The administrative cost of the better buy should not be exaggerated; nor should the number of cases. We estimate that a relatively small number, about 10,000 taxpayers in Great Britain, might be affected out of an estimated benefits caseload of five million. So the administrative implications of that aspect of the benefit system must be seen in that context.

It has been argued that there should be no non-dependant deductions in council tax benefit. Non-dependant deductions have been part of the benefit scheme for a long time. They reflect the assumption that adult non-dependants sharing a liable persons dwelling are contributing to the council tax. Similar rules apply to other income-related benefits, including housing benefit, and did apply in the rate rebate schemes. There are no deductions for non-dependants in the community charge benefit scheme, since the charge is a personal liability.

The level of non-dependant deductions in council tax benefit will I believe, be modest. It is reasonable to expect a contribution of £1 a week from non-dependants with incomes up to £100 a week, in current terms, and of £2 a week from non-dependants with higher incomes. The lower rate reduction of £1 a week will apply in respect of non-dependants who are not in full-time work. No non-dependant deductions are made in respect of people on income support or people such as full time students. No deduction will be made, for example, for pensioner non-dependants who are on income support, and a lower rate of deduction of £1 a week will apply to pensioner non-dependants not on income support. Seen in the round, it does not seem quite so unreasonable as has been suggested.

Claim forms will generally be a matter for local authorities, but we shall be producing a claim form which will be open for consultation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central made a good point about publicity. It is extremely important that local authorities work hard to get out the information about the proposals to ensure that the majority of people benefit. It is the wish of my Department and all concerned to ensure that the rebates are properly taken up and are used for the purpose that we want to achieve.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to move forward these regulations. The matters that I have not been able to pick up will have been noted, and hon. Members can expect replies from me. These regulations provide a good system of rebate and benefit for those on

the lowest possible income, and below, who will have to deal with the new council tax. They have been thought through very carefully with local authority associations.

I am grateful for the helpful comments that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, which see the regulations launched in as reasonable and fair-minded a way as possible. I am quite sure that those in local authorities up and down the land administering them will apply their usual determination and common sense to the work that they do on behalf of all of us, and I hope that the regulations will be the basis for a useful and successful scheme for the future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the draft Council Tax Benefit (General) Regulations 1992, which were laid before this House on 18th June, be approved.

## Departmental Select Committees

**Madam Speaker:** Before we begin the debate on the motion on Select Committees, it might be helpful to the House if I described the procedure to be followed.

We shall begin with a general debate on the motion and the issues raised by the amendments. This may continue for one and a half hours, and as a number of Members wish to speak, it would be helpful if speeches were limited. At the conclusion of the debate, the Chair will first give an opportunity for the selected amendments to be moved formally—that is to say, amendment (f) on a Northern Ireland Committee in the name of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and amendment (h) on an Energy Sub-Committee in the name of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). The Question will then be put on the motion itself.

8.59 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I beg to move,

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended:

In the Table:

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '3. Education, Science and Arts | Department of Education and Science; Office of Arts and Libraries | 13 | 3' |

and inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '3. Education | Department for Education | 11 | 3' |

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '5. Energy | Department of Energy | 11 | 3' |

by inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. National Heritage | Department of National Heritage | 11 | 3' |

by inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. Science and Technology | Office of Science and Technology | 11 | 3' |

in the third and fourth columns of the entry relating to Scottish Affairs, by leaving out '13 5' and inserting '11 3'

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '14. Treasury and Civil Service | Treasury, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (but excluding the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise | 11 | 3' |

and inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. Treasury and Civil Service | Treasury, Office of Public Service and Science (but excluding the Office of Science and Technology and the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise | 11 | 3' |

In paragraph (3):

by leaving out lines 14 to 17.

The House will perhaps understand if I approach this speech with a certain sense of nostalgia after many years during which I have made speeches such as the one that has just been delivered. I have operated in various capacities over the years, and I suppose that I am one of the relatively few people in the House who, even now, feel easy with terms like "non-dependant deductions" and some of the others that we have heard deployed with such skill by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who has left the Chamber.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The right hon. Gentleman is looking older.

**Mr. Newton:** I do not know how to respond to this badinage from the Liberal Democrats Bench. If the hon.

*[Mr. Newton]*

Gentleman is saying that I look as if I am having even more problems than I had with social security, I have to say, especially as I launch this debate, that I have a sense of some satisfaction in moving a motion that large parts of the press, and perhaps an even larger part of the House, told me they did not think I would be able to deliver before the summer recess.

Bearing in mind your remarks, Madam Speaker, I shall speak briefly. It is clear that, despite the relative modesty of the motion, the proposals that I am putting before the House have attracted a good deal of interest, and a number of Members wish to speak in the debate. At this stage, it will probably be for the convenience of hon. Members if I explain the motion quite quickly.

The revisions to Standing Order No. 130 that are reflected in the motion introduce the changes to the Select Committee system required by the post-election changes in the machinery of government. I think it can be said that they reflect the Government's continuing commitment to the basic principle that the Committee structure should shadow the various Departments of State. The motion provides for two new Committees to be set up, to shadow the Department of National Heritage and the Office of Science and Technology, both of them with the usual, maximum number of 11 Members and with a quorum of three.

The new National Heritage Committee will look at all the functions of the new Department, including the former responsibilities of the Office of Arts and Libraries and have responsibility for broadcasting, the built heritage, sport, tourism, film, export licensing of works of art and, in due course—subject to the passage of the necessary legislation—the proposed national lottery and millennium fund.

So far as science and technology is concerned, the proposal is to set up a full Committee to oversee the work of the new Office of Science and Technology, bearing in mind the importance attached to science and technology matters by the House over a long period, which was reflected in the Procedure Committee's report on the working of the Select Committee system in 1990. In the circumstances of the last Parliament, that report recommended either that there should be a joint Committee with the House of Lords or that two additional Members should be provided for the Education, Science and Arts Committee, with power to form a Sub-Committee on Science and Technology. The House approved the latter option in amendments to the orders of reference last July.

The appointment of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to take responsibility at Cabinet level for science and technology demonstrates very clearly the Government's commitment to the importance of these issues, and that is reflected also in our proposal for a Select Committee. As the new Office of Science and Technology is within the Cabinet Office, we could have proposed to transfer the power to form a Sub-Committee, and the additional members to do this, to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

That would have placed an additional burden on that busy Committee, which already makes use of the power to form a Sub-Committee on civil service matters.

Instead, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Duchy have readily agreed to my proposal that the Office of Science and Technology should have its own Select Committee. Other functions of the renamed Office of Public Service and Science, including civil service matters, the citizens charter, and "next steps", will fall, as before, to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

Provision for the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee to set up a Committee to look at science matters, as set out in the first four lines of the current Standing Order, is therefore removed. That is the purpose of the last amendment in the motion. In other words, the former Education, Science and Arts Select Committee will now look solely at education issues and will revert to the normal maximum membership of 11, with a quorum of three.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Does the Leader of the House accept from me, as a member of the first Science and Technology Select Committee set up in 1966 under the chairmanship of Arthur Palmer, that there are real problems here? If the House of Commons is to scrutinise science policy, even under the new ministerial arrangements, because of the nature of the problems that it faces it must be involved to some extent in the Department of Education, certainly in the Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry and possibly in the Scottish Office and Welsh Office. My direct question is: will the new Select Committee have the authority to roam over the responsibilities of other Departments that are not covered by the Office of Science and Technology?

**Mr. Newton:** The direct answer is that that is conceived in relation to the basic proposition that the House go down the path of departmental Select Committees. Therefore, the Committee's remit is the work covered by the Office of Science and Technology. I hope that that is a sufficiently direct answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

**Mr. Dalyell:** It is very unsatisfactory.

**Mr. Newton:** Obviously, the hon. Gentleman is free to make a case for a Committee that is more along the lines of a House of Lords Committee, and I suspect that he intends to do so. The basic proposition has been made that the work of departmental Select Committees should match that of Departments. I acknowledge that that is the basis on which this proposal is put before the House.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): The Select Committee on Procedure report in 1978, which looked forward to the present system of departmental Select Committees, argued that Select Committees should be primarily, but not exclusively, based on Departments of State. Given the fact that energy constitutes 20 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product, is there not a strong case for a Select Committee on Energy to cover that important aspect of the nation's life? Does the Leader of the House really believe that that huge Department, covered by a huge Committee in the Department of Trade and Industry, will be able to deal adequately with energy issues?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman is advancing arguments which I suspect will crop up in various forms during the debate. Amendment (h) on that subject adopts a different tack from that proposed by the hon. Gentleman, who suggests a separate Committee. It

suggests tacking energy on to the Select Committee for the Environment, creating a different kind of multi-departmental conglomerate. I should like to hear arguments developed on that subject before I comment further. My present purpose is to make a brief introductory speech, recognising that the hon. Gentleman and others will wish to make a number of points later.

I was about to comment on the energy issue, which now falls to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, with the exception of energy efficiency, which is the responsibility of the Department of the Environment and would therefore fall to the Environment Select Committee. For that to happen, no amendments are required to the Standing Orders that govern either of those Committees, which may reflect the House's long-standing policy. I cannot pretend that I see a case for retaining the Energy Select Committee, given that the Energy Department has disappeared. I emphasise what I said in business questions last Thursday, that that is in no sense a reflection on the Members who have served on the Energy Committee since the current system was set up. They have done a good job in respect of their duties.

**Dr. Michael Clark** (Rochford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Newton:** Yes, indeed. I was about to refer to the distinguished Chairman, who led the Committee in its excellent work, along with whom I represent, as Member of Parliament, the borough of Chelmsford.

**Dr. Clark:** My right hon. Friend said that, as Select Committees will shadow Departments of State, he saw no reason to have a Select Committee on Energy. Perhaps he would agree with the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) that energy constitutes 20 per cent. of gross domestic product. As, according to his logic, there can be a Select Committee only if there is an appropriate Department of State, does he agree that it was inappropriate to abolish that Department of State?

**Mr. Newton:** I regard my hon. Friend's suggestion as a temptation, which I shall avoid, to comment on decisions that are fairly and squarely for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as they relate to the machinery of government. Mine is the relatively humble role of seeking to match the operation of the House of Commons to the consequences of those decisions.

As I said in business questions last week, although the matter is touched on in the motion in only one limited way, I am happy to say that the Government firmly intend to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. The relevant change to the Standing Order does not need to provide for a Committee. It simply provides for its membership to be 11 rather than 13, and its quorum to be three rather than five, to put it on a par with all the other Select Committees. That will ease the way to the setting up of the Committee, which I believe is the general wish of all hon. Members.

The House is well aware that I am relatively new to the job. One lesson that I have quickly learnt is that it has, at least in one way, a good deal in common with my social security post. Whatever advance one proposes, the applause is muted and quickly replaced by cries of "More, more." In this case, the manifestation of "More, more" is the range of amendments on the Order Paper to which it is clear a number of hon. Members wish to refer in their speeches. Perhaps it would be rash of me to excite hopes and say that I will feel able to invite the House to go beyond what I propose, but I look forward to hearing what is said and, with the leave of the House, to responding later.

9.12 pm

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): It is nice to be able to begin with one or two words of welcome. I start where the Leader of the House left off, and give a particular welcome to the establishment at long last of the long overdue Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Without wishing to sound churlish, it falls to me to remind the House that the Government have been in breach of Standing Orders for more than five years by not acting on that matter. There is no doubt that that has constituted a serious gap in the proper parliamentary scrutiny of Government business. Much as I welcome the fact that a Select Committee is at long last being set up, I regret that its membership has been reduced. I am sorry, as are many of my hon. Friends, that it is to be a smaller Select Committee, but better smaller and late than never.

There are other aspects of the motion that are to be welcomed. I and my hon. Friends strongly support the establishment of a Select Committee to shadow the Department of National Heritage. Although it has been designated the "Ministry of Fun" for obvious reasons, it has some extremely important issues to consider. We are seeing an almost daily steady decline in the standards of public service broadcasting as the Thatcherite—I use that somewhat outdated word as the ethos still prevails—view of broadcasting is imposed on the industry and morale is at an all-time low.

We are slipping slowly and inexorably towards a United States system of broadcasting. Only last week, a report commissioned by the Policy Studies Institute said that there had been a savage decline in the amount of time given by the BBC to features, documentaries, current affairs, sport and children's programmes. That will no doubt continue, and that is something that the Select Committee emphatically needs to look at.

I make no apology for being populist, if that is how it is seen, in saying that I hope that the Select Committee will look sooner rather than later at the way in which we are being denied the right to see live sporting events on our terrestrial screens. About 96 per cent. of our constituents have access to BBC and ITV, on which they could previously watch world cup cricket and now can watch league football. Due to the magic of the free enterprise market system, only 13 per cent. will be able to watch premiere league football next season. I say "the magic of the market system", but it is a system which bewilders me, because the company BSkyB, which has managed to take over the exclusive right to premiere league football, reported a loss of £759 million in the 37 weeks to the end of June last year. If that is the operation of market forces, it is very strange. Clearly those are issues that we hope will be scrutinised by the Select Committee on National Heritage.

We also welcome the Select Committee on Science and Technology. However, I come now to a couple of points of criticism. The Select Committee on Science and Technology will exist basically to shadow much of the work that is the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but not all that work because, as the

*[Mr. Bruce Grocott]*

Prime Minister emphasised, one of his key jobs is to oversee the famous citizens charter and its operation. On no less an occasion than the debate on the Loyal Address, the Prime Minister said:

"The citizens charter will be at the centre of the Government's decision-making"—[*Official Report*, 6 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 66.]

It is the job of the House to be there at the sharp end with its Select Committees at the centre of the Government's decision-making. I should like to know which Select Committee will be responsible for overseeing the operation of the citizens charter.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Would my hon. Friend go any way towards accepting that, if the object of the Select Committee on Science and Technology is to consider the Government's science policy, if the Select Committee cannot at its discretion consider the work of the Ministry of Defence and the Board of Trade, let alone the work of the Department of Education and the Department of Health, that Committee is a sham?

**Mr. Grocott:** I should not be quite as critical as my hon. Friend. There is a good deal of overlap in practice in a lot of what the Select Committees do. There is often a dispute about whether a particular subject should be covered by one Select Committee or another. But there is no doubt that overall—that is the only way in which we can judge these things—the establishment of the Select Committee is one I welcome, as I am sure does my hon. Friend.

I place it clearly on record that the Opposition were completely opposed to the ending of the Department of Energy, not least because of the tremendous importance to our economy, of the work of those in the energy industries, and, for those who listened to yesterday's debate, the unique dangers faced by people who work in the energy industries, whether in the pits or on the North sea. We very much regret the end of that Department, and that is the motivating factor behind an amendment to today's motion, which I commend to the House. I hope that the Leader of the House will consider it sympathetically.

**Mr. Doug Hoyle** (Warrington, North): Does my hon. Friend not agree with me that the difficulty is that, in energy, many problems confront us, not least the privatisation of coal, the rising prices of electricity and gas and the lack of a real voice for the consumer? If we look at what is happening in trade and industry, the need for an effective watchdog, the continuing recession, and the need to look at crises in the City, at Lloyd's and elsewhere, it is clear that both these subjects deserve a Select Committee. Would it not be sensible, since we all decry what the Government have done in bringing them together, that there should at least be a Sub-Committee for both, so that each can play its full role? There is no way, given the problems that confront us, that one Committee can do justice to trade and industry and to energy.

**Mr. Grocott:** My hon. Friend makes a very telling point. I am sure that he will have seen the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), which would specifically establish a Sub-Committee of the Trade and Industry Committee to deal with energy matters. I very much hope that that amendment will commend itself to the House.

Finally, I refer back to the debate that we had a week ago today, when the whole House strongly supported the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, so far as it related to Select Committee Chairmen and members. It recognised the special powers which members of Select Committees have and the special access which Chairmen of Select Committees have. That is an important Select Committee recommendation and should be the basis on which future Select Committees are established.

I very much hope that the Leader of the House will come forward with resolutions to implement the recommendations of that Select Committee, as we said in last week's debate; but I hope that, in the meantime, it will be clear from this debate and from the debate a week ago that the message from that Select Committee is one of which anyone thinking of serving on a Select Committee or acting as Chairman of a Select Committee should be extremely mindful—I put it as neutrally as that. It was the clear view of the House that that was a good Select Committee report and one that should be acknowledged and understood by all hon. Members.

With those few words of caution, I hope that the Leader of the House will respond to the points that I have made, and that this motion will commend itself to the House.

9.23 pm

**Dr. Michael Clark** (Rochford): I quite understand the position in which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House finds himself tonight when he is recommending Select Committees to shadow and monitor Departments of State. The Energy Select Committee, of which I had the privilege of being Chairmen for three years until the last general election, anticipated this position. It anticipated that the Department of Energy might well disappear and be merged with the Department of Trade and Industry. In an attempt to point out to my right hon. Friend and others who make decisions regarding the House the wisdom of retaining an Energy Select Committee, we produced our report entitled "House of Commons Scrutiny of Energy Matters". It is to that that I should like to talk in the few minutes that I have at my disposal in this rather short debate.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend and welcome the creation of a Select Committee on Science and Technology, even though I accept that there are some shortcomings in that Committee, as has already been mentioned by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is that a coded way of saying that the hon. Gentleman agrees with what I have said?

**Dr. Clark:** The hon. Member knows from the many years that we have shared an interest in science that we both seek to have a Committee in the House that has more interest in science than the Education and Science Select Committee had in the past. It was indeed a Committee in which education was writ large and science was writ small. Anything that improves that situation, I welcome. The hon. Gentleman and I have both been recommending for some time that there should be a Science and Technology Committee in this House as well as in the other place. If it is not perfect, this is at least a major step in the right direction.

**Mr. Patrick Thompson** (Norwich, North): Having sat on the Education and Science Select Committee, I join

other right hon. and hon. Members in welcoming the formation of the new Science and Technology Select Committee. It means that science and technology will get a lead from this place that they have never had before.

**Dr. Clark:** When the Select Committee on Energy produced its reports, its members wondered to what extent they influenced Government policies and decisions. Others may say that the Committee had no influence at all and just created a series of coincidences—that, when it made recommendations, by coincidence the Government were on the same track and would have introduced some of the measures they did, even without the Committee's recommendations.

Be that as it may, as an ex-management consultant I am happy to say that, even if the Committee's reports were superfluous, it is reassuring that they pointed in the same direction as the coincidences. We obtained some satisfaction from that. We believe, however, that we did have influence.

The Committee's report on mining subsidence, for example, was followed shortly thereafter by a Bill that embraced many of our recommendations on subsidence in Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. When, in the early 1980s, the Committee recommended that the Government should avoid generating 15,000 MW of electricity using a series of pressurised water reactors, shortly thereafter the PWR programme was curtailed and a whole family of reactors did not get built.

The changes in North sea oil taxation that we recommended in 1983 were seen—by coincidence, design or influence—to be acted on. So it was with our 1983 recommendation to establish an Office of Energy Efficiency.

In 1985, the Committee recommended the abolition of the North sea oil corporation. Giving evidence, one Minister defended the British National Oil Corporation, even though work to dismantle it was clearly already under way. An announcement to that effect was made three weeks after that Minister's evidence was given.

Perhaps the biggest example of all was the Committee's recommendation, when electricity privatisation was under consideration, that nuclear generation should not go into the private sector. We gave a whole host of reasons. On that occasion, there were no coincidences. Instead, our recommendations were ignored and it was planned to include all nuclear generation in the privatisation. However, we were not surprised when, one year later, an announcement was made in this Chamber that nuclear generation would be taken out of the privatisation programme.

We are not sure how that influence came about. Was it a question of exerting pressure over a period of time, prompting the Department to re-examine issues that it had already considered, or of forcing Ministers to take a closer interest in matters that had interested the Committee? On many occasions, a feature of the Committee's inquiries has been that they have prompted the Department to hold its own inquiry, finishing either shortly before or shortly after our own. We believe that we prompted many inquiries, to the good of the Department, the Government, and the country.

We sought also to hold Ministers accountable, call civil servants before us to explain their actions, and to call to account those in charge of public bodies. The Committee ensured that information was made available to the House, the energy industry, the public, pressure groups, and the media. We believe that we did much to improve the transparency of information associated with the nuclear industry and others.

There is still much work to be done. Assuming that the Energy Select Committee will be abolished tonight, let me bring to the attention of whomever inherits the mantle page 5 of the report to which I referred. It reveals a catalogue of work—so much work, indeed, that I worry about whether a Committee dealing with energy only as a part-time job could undertake it all.

There is much to be scrutinised. There is the continuing evolution of the privatised electricity industry, and the future of the coal industry, which is now the subject of privatisation proposals. Who will scrutinise those proposals from a parliamentary point of view, apart from members of the Standing Committee considering the relevant Bill? There is the 1994 review of nuclear power: that should be scrutinised carefully, and Members of Parliament should give it their attention well before 1994.

We must continue to monitor the fossil fuel levy, and decide what can be done to reduce it even further. We must examine the restructuring of the gas industry through the activities of the Office of Fair Trading and, of course, the Ofgas regulator. Is the industry right to retain its present size, or should it be broken down into smaller competing parts? The depletion of our oil and gas on the UK continental shelf is a big item in itself, and it will take any Committee a long time to come up with the right proposals and to formulate appropriate policies.

There is also the need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, which contribute to global warming, and the need to examine the Government's role in funding research and development in the energy sector. Finally, we should consider the implications for the United Kingdom of the European Commission's proposals to unify and regulate the European energy market.

As I have said, there is much to be done. Who will do it? Perhaps the Select Committee on Trade and Industry will oblige. It will be difficult to ask questions about energy in the House; on the two occasions in the current Session when Trade and Industry questions have been asked, four or five energy questions have been at the bottom of the Order Paper and some have not been reached at all. I hope that, if the Trade and Industry Committee undertake all the work, it will not turn out to be like the Select Committee on Education and Science, which has been mentioned by one or two hon. Members. It must not be 95 per cent. trade and industry and only 5 per cent. energy. I hope that it will give at least 40 per cent. of its time to energy.

If amendment (h) is accepted, an Energy Sub-Committee may be set up. I feel that that would be almost the worst of all worlds. If such a Sub-Committee is to operate effectively and thoroughly, it will have to meet almost as frequently as the main Committee, and Members of Parliament with an interest in energy will have to sit on both the main Committee and the Sub-Committee. Opposition Members who take Select Committees seriously know that they entail a great deal of work, and that sitting on a Sub-Committee means sitting on the main Committee as well. I doubt that many hon. Members will be prepared to devote themselves to the amount of work that will be required, and I therefore do not feel that a Sub-Committee is a good idea.

*[Dr. Clark]*

As the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) pointed out, energy constitutes 20 per cent. of our gross domestic product. It is a coherent and clearly defined subject. Whatever its shortcomings, in recent weeks the Select Committee has received the support of 88 Members of Parliament in an early-day motion.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East): Despite what the hon. Gentleman has said—much of which I should like to be able to support—will he vote for the establishment of a Sub-Committee in the belief that it would be better than nothing?

**Dr. Clark:** Yes, of course I believe that a Sub-Committee would be better than none at all. A full Committee would be best, but I shall vote for a Sub-Committee if that is all there is to vote for.

As I said, 88 hon. Members would like the Select Committee on Energy to remain. The chairman of Nuclear Electric indicated likewise in a letter to *The Times*. We have had letters from generators, oil companies and trade associations, and we know that at least one regulator would like us to remain. It seems that we may not do so. It appears that tonight may see the end of a Committee which, I believe, has served the House, the industry and, I hope, the nation well in the past 13 years. Whoever is to scrutinise energy matters, we urge them to be diligent. Whoever scrutinises energy, we wish them well.

9.34 pm

**Mr. James Molyneaux** (Lagan Valley): In a sense, my amendment is a re-run of that which featured in the debate on 18 July 1991. The then Leader of the House did his best to ignore the amendment, and I have no reason to believe that the Government will display any greater enthusiasm for the one that we have tabled on this occasion.

On that earlier occasion, the only contributor to oppose the creation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland was the Government spokesman, the then Leader of the House. All other hon. Members who spoke to the amendment fully supported us. As is so often the case in this so-called democratic institution, had it been left to the hon. Members who were present, freed from the malign influence of the Whips Office, our amendment would have been carried. That malign influence will no doubt be employed today to ensure that democracy does not prevail, and the same malign influence will probably be used to give the Select Committee on Energy the chop in the same undemocratic fashion. We shall do our best to assist hon. Members of all parties who have spoken so eloquently in support of the retention of some form of Committee on energy.

In a letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure dated 8 February 1990, I wrote:

> "There ought to be a Northern Ireland Select Committee dealing with those matters for which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible, but for which there is no counterpart in Great Britain, e.g. the implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985, and the political direction of security."

On another occasion I went a bit further. In a letter dated 22 May, I wrote to the Chairman of the Select Committee:

> "Thank you for your letter of 15 May about the proposal for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs"—

which, incidentally, had wide support from the Procedure Committee. My letter continued:

> "such a body would be a great asset to the people of Northern Ireland, extending as it would to their affairs the same scrutiny as is provided for the rest of the United Kingdom. In our view, the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee should not be delayed for the invalid reason that some day a structure of Government may be invented for Northern Ireland."

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): My right hon. Friend might remember that the Front-Bench spokesman for the Opposition today the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), referred to the need for a Select Committee to scrutinise at the sharp end of Government. Is it not a shame and a travesty of scrutiny in the House that, since Select Committees were established, the sharp end of Government has not been scrutinised?

**Mr. Molyneaux:** Yes, and my hon. Friend will be delighted that he and I were supported by the Select Committee on Procedure in its second report, especially paragraphs 272 to 278. The report stated:

> "Accordingly, whilst we do not believe that the uncertainties over the future administration of the Province can be allowed to preclude indefinitely the establishment of proper arrangements for the scrutiny by the House of the Northern Ireland Department, we accept that this will not be a sensible moment to recommend the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland affairs. Nevertheless, we consider that the Government cannot postpone dealing with this matter for very much longer and we will keep the position under review."

Then comes the key sentence:

> "We may well wish to return to it once the outcome of the current talks is clear."

The earlier talks had ended two weeks before the debate on 18 July 1991. In that debate, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure said, not unreasonably, that, although the talks had ended:

> "there has not been enough time for us to reconsider the issue."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 585.]

I do not know whether the Committee reconsidered the matter in the nine months that elapsed before entirely new talks commenced.

It is true that the new talks are currently under way. Just in case the Government have it in mind to wheel out the old device of blocking the amendment on the ground that this would not be a sensible time to establish a Select Committee, I should tell the House that all the participants in the current talks have taken the view that the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is a matter for the House of Commons and not for those participating in or engaged in the talks.

The former obstacle is therefore removed; I hope that the Government will not grub around in search of another obstacle, because that would be equally unconvincing.

**Rev. Ian Paisley** (Antrim, North): Is it not right to say that, if the talks succeeded, there would be matters for which the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his colleagues would be responsible to the House? Will they never be brought into scrutiny by the House? Do they have some sort of special exemption by which the House can never question them about how they do their work or make them give an account of their stewardship of Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Molyneaux:** My hon. Friend has reminded me that we now have a five-way agreement. I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is here representing us and standing up for us. My hon. Friend has reminded me that we have a five-way agreement,

because the Government team in the talks—we are not giving away secrets—has also agreed that there are certain matters which will remain in perpetuity the sole responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. We have a five-way agreement that this is a matter for the House of Commons to decide tonight, minus the malign influence of the Whips Office.

I hope that the Government will not look round for another obstacle. To do so would cast a shadow over the Government's integrity in the light of the response towards the end of the debate on 18 July 1991, when the then Leader of the House declared:

"now is not the time to set up such a Select Committee. However, I assure the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley that the matter can be reviewed again at appropriate times, and that I shall be prepared to do that."—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1991; Vol. 195, c. 602-3.]

The present Leader of the House was informed last week of our intention to press for a decision this evening. I know that he understands our reason for asking to be included with the other countries in the United Kingdom. It is simply to enable the Government to demonstrate that their philosophy of open government shall apply to all parts of the United Kingdom, in line with the assertions and undertakings given by the Prime Minister in the heat of the last week of the general election campaign. Those facilities and benefits should not be withheld from one part of the kingdom which has suffered greatly from being different simply because the Government insist on making it different.

The establishment of a Select Committee would be a stabilising factor. It would not compete with the current talks, but would be an injection of confidence which could and would assist all of us who are currently engaged in the talks and trying hard to agree on a more effective method of governing Northern Ireland. It would be a prize that would cost the Government nothing. Because it is a benefit that the House of Commons has the power to bestow, it would restore faith in the willingness of the House of Commons to extend that protection to the interests of majorities and minorities alike.

9.44 pm

**Mr. Bruce George** (Walsall, South): The text for this evening's debate was presented by the Leader of the House when he referred to the relative modesty of the motion. Never have truer words been spoken. I am very disappointed by the modesty of the proposals and I cannot allow the debate to proceed much further without expressing as a Back Bencher my profound sense of dissatisfaction. I have been a member of the Select Committee on Defence since 1979, and as I believe in the potential of Select Committees as the jewel in the crown of our legislature, I cannot believe that we are going to wait so long before our Select Committee system is reactivated.

Staff are sitting on their hands through no fault of their own and areas of policy desperately require the scrutiny that qualified Select Committee members can provide. I do not want to discuss where the blame lies—whether with the Government or with the Opposition. However, next time round and after the next general election, we should try to do things better than we have managed after every election since the Select Committees were established in 1979.

The Select Committees were set up in 1979, although it took many months before they were activated. After 13 years, I had hoped that we would have been able to reflect on the performance of Select Committees and decide how they should operate in future. I am disappointed by the modest proposals in the Procedure Committee's report.

The key to understanding why our Committee system is one of the weakest in the western world is that we have a combination of members of the Executive who can set the ground rules for the way in which the legislature operates in the same way as corrupt boxing promoters can choose the contenders, the boxing board and even the referee. The procedure is a sad reflection on this House and on the way in which the Executive operate.

While I can understand why the Government want to abolish the Department of Energy, although I disagree with that, the case for a Select Committee on Energy is overwhelming. Why should the Executive determine the form of scrutiny in the House? I hope that hon. Members will have the guts to vote against the motion. However, we fail not simply because of the overbearing dominance of the Executive, who have ruled this House for generations, but also because we have been too supine.

Hordes of hon. Members around the building are doing their correspondence as they watch television. They will not have heard the arguments, and if there is a vote, they will support the Government. They will not have heard the arguments why there should be Energy and Northern Ireland Select Committees or stronger Sub-Committees. Why should the Executive tell a Select Committee that it cannot set up a Sub-Committee because that will cause too much work for the Executive and be costly?

We need only consider the Standing Committees and Select Committees of the House to discover what scrutiny costs the taxpayer. The Select Committee of which I have had the privilege to be a member is scrutinising a labyrinthine Department which is probably the most devious in the western world. I should like to know whether there is a more devious Department than the Ministry of Defence——

**Mr. David Trimble** (Upper Bann): What about the Northern Ireland Office?

**Mr. George:** I think that the Ministry of Defence is the most devious.

We must consider how much is spent on scrutiny compared with what we are scrutinising. We are scrutinising £20,000 million of taxpayers' money. Compared with that sum, the expenditure devoted to Select Committees is puny. We should not feel remotely guilty about wanting more power and better staffing, but we did not ask for that in the Procedure Committee report and we shall not get it.

The date 25 June 1979 should have been a crucial date in 20th-century parliamentary history, because that is when my Select Committee was set up. Lord St. John of Fawsley set the Committees up and, for his pains, was sacked shortly afterwards. He spoke of a change in the balance of power between the legislature and the Executive. On reflection, that was rather a pious hope.

The history of parliamentary reform is deeply unimpressive. Changes have been many—mostly to the advantage of the Executive in running this place—but reforms have been few. One of the few reforms that we can record in the 20th century is the establishment of the Select Committee system. Regrettably, it has been downhill all the way before and since.

*[Mr. George]*

The Stevas reform slightly slowed down the further decline in the power of the House, but unless we provide more power of parliamentary scrutiny by Committees, the Executive will become even more dominant. The motion merely shuffles the deckchairs around on the sinking Titanic. That is all that we are doing today. We are considering whether to add a little Committee here and remove a Committee there or whether to set up a Sub-Committee here or there. We are not discussing the powers of the Committees. That does not reflect well on the way in which we operate.

My principal criticism is not of the Leader of the House, whom I admire, but of my colleagues. I intend no disrespect to them, but recommendation xxvii of the report, "The Working of the Select Committee System", says:

"We do not consider that new or additional powers for Select Committees are necessary or would be workable."

That is an appalling admission.

What should we be doing? We should not be messing around considering which Select Committee to set up. We should be asking why the Select Committees cannot play a role in the budgetary process. Why is ours virtually the only committee system in the democratic world which is excluded from the budgetary process? In the Defence Select Committee we have amiable seminars on the defence estimates, but we do not have a real budgetary role.

The Select Committee ought to have some role in the budgetary process. We ought to be able to set up sub-committees. When one is dealing with a Department like the Ministry of Defence, one must strike across a wide variety of areas of policy, administration and expenditure. That is why we need Sub-Committees and, in some cases, more than 11 members. That follows on from the points that have been made.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee had an Overseas Aid Committee, which was busted. What has happened subsequently to overseas aid? Once a Select Committee cannot set up a Sub-Committee, its role has declined. I believe that Sub-Committees are important. The Defence Select Committee should have a role in the procurement process, but we do not have such a role because we operate within a culture of ministerial secrecy.

In conclusion, the Select Committee's lack of power is partly our fault. The establishment of the Select Committees was an attempt to rationalise a hotch-potch of Committees which had evolved over decades, indeed, centuries. It was an attempt to make those Committees rational by simply setting up Committees to match Government Departments. But while the Executive has sought to overcome departmentalism and to break down the difficulties of running Governments exclusively through watertight Departments, we have made no commensurate effort to do so. We, the members of the Select Committees, guard our pitches jealously. We should have the power to establish Joint Committees.

Why should we not have set up a Joint Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee on the Falklands, the Westland affair or the Iraqi dispute? The Select Committee on Trade and Industry examined the super-gun affair. The Public Committee has poached consistently. It has been a classic case of divide and rule. So long as we fight against each other, the Executive remain relatively unscrutinised.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): I fully sympathise with the splendid argument that the hon. Gentleman advances on behalf of Back Benchers, but I hope that he will not forget, for example, that in the last Parliament the Health Select Committee and the Social Security Select Committee undertook a joint inquiry into the level of fees for private residential and nursing homes. The lead Committee was the Social Security Committee. If Select Committees are determined to do things, they have the power to do so within the authority of the House. The hon. Gentleman is right that the Select Committees have notched up a problem by not necessarily doing precisely what the House wanted. They are not prepared to stand up for their authority and perform the duties that they can undertake with the authority of the House.

**Mr. George:** I appreciate that that is true, but the fact that the hon. Gentleman gave an example of a joint inquiry that is unique illustrates my point. Those two Committees were one and, at least in the short term, had the habit of working together. However, the Select Committee on Defence would no more run a joint inquiry with the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs than the Americans would have gone to the moon with the Russians 10 years ago.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is there not a crisp answer to my hon. Friend's question, "Why?" It is simply that party comes before Parliament in the House of Commons. Unlike the American legislature, we are a so-called pool of talent from which both the Executive and the legislature are selected. It was a crying shame that the House of Commons was not far tougher with Leon Brittan, as it ought to have called Lady Thatcher before it.

**Mr. George:** As a member of that Committee, I can reinforce what my hon. Friend says.

While travelling around eastern Europe to help—or hinder, as some people might say—to set up legislatures and committees, I recall a bizarre occasion when I spoke in Bulgaria at a conference on the control of intelligence services. I confess that the section on United Kingdom intelligence in my presentation was not protracted.

One must bear in mind the fact that many of the countries which we accused of having rubber-stamp legislatures of no consequence have jumped over our heads and achieved a level of legislative scrutiny of their Executive that should put us to shame. We are in danger of moving from being a reactive to a rubber-stamp legislature.

Select Committees, which are functioning and financed properly, with the powers and respect that they deserve, could help to redress the inexorable decline of the legislature. If we simply allow the Government to get away with telling us what to do and tinkering with the existing system, we shall deserve to slip even further into political impotence—and we shall fully deserve that unless we fight against it.

9.56 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): I can do no better than follow the general constitutional argument that the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) advanced so well. It is vital to democracy that the legislature scrutinises the Executive—whoever they are—effectively. The logic of that is that, as soon as a new Government are formed, Parliament should set up its own

Select Committee structure automatically, within a matter of days. If it does not, it is not merely a question of wasting the resources of people who are ready to do the job of serving Members. The Government make decisions from the day that they take office, and Parliament should be scrutinising those decisions and asking questions from that day onwards.

Obviously, some elements of the motion are welcome, some are logical and some overdue. With the setting up of a new Department of National Heritage, a Select Committee to shadow it is welcome. I heard and agreed with the remark made by the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) and the intervention by his hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), as I welcome a Select Committee to shadow the Government on science and technology matters—it is long overdue. It is not possible to contemplate a progressive democracy in which acute thinking, observation and discussion occur in relation to huge areas of great importance without such a Select Committee. The Select Committee on Education and Science was 90 per cent. education and 10 per cent. science. It was not wrong to spend that time on education —far from it—but it was wrong that we did not spend the appropriate time on science and technology. So that is progress.

Clearly, there has been no progress over a series of matters which are the subject of the amendments which were selected and those tabled but not selected. My hon. Friends and I share the view enunciated clearly by the former Chairman of the Energy Select Committee, the hon. Member for Rochford—there is all-party support for it—that it is not realistic or appropriate for energy matters to be subsumed within the Department of Trade and Industry.

Whatever the argument about the logic of the disappearance of the Department of Energy, it does not follow automatically that Departments must be mirrored absolutely by the House. The reasons are obvious: first, the decision as to how to monitor Government should be for the House; and, secondly, practical questions arise about the enormity of the work load. However, the energy policy of this resource-rich country and the agenda of issues, adequately enunciated by the former Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy—as evidenced by the work of that Committee over the years—logically point to the need for one group of people to continue to concentrate on energy.

Questions put in this debate have already shown that it will not be possible for a Committee to straddle the portfolios of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Energy. The Committee will probably do justice to neither, let alone to both. We support the idea that energy should be looked after by a separate Committee. We believe that that attitude will be vindicated by a decision taken by the House in the future, if not tonight.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and I tabled an amendment to provide the logical second-best to a separate Select Committee on Energy. If one must put energy anywhere, it should, logically, be considered with other natural resources—water, land and air. That is why we tabled our amendment to include the energy portfolio in the Department of the Environment's brief. That is the logical approach adopted by other countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), our Chief Whip, has also put his name to the amendment calling for a Select Committee on Northern Ireland, on which we shall vote. We support the argument of the leader of the Ulster Unionists that it is ludicrous that the House does not have such a Select Committee. That is unfair to the people of Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom is made up of four separate entities, and it is unfair that the people of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are denied the ability to scrutinise legislation.

The current arrangement is even more illogical when one considers the way in which we handle Northern Ireland legislation in the House. We have all been here when such legislation, which is parallel to a Bill that is debated at length on Second Reading, in Committee, on Report and on Third Reading, is put through the House, by order, in an hour and a half or three hours. That system for primary Northern Ireland legislation makes the argument for a Select Committee even stronger. My colleagues and I want to make it as clear as possible that that system is unfair to the people of Northern Ireland, their parliamentary representatives and to the House.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for the new Select Committees that will be established. Does he agree that there is some duplicity on the Government's part? They argue that they need those new Select Committees because it is policy to shadow each Department, but they withhold their support for a Select Committee to shadow the Northern Ireland Office.

**Mr. Hughes:** I entirely agree. The Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Northern Ireland Office are responsible for a range of issues and, therefore, if one intends to cover all relevant business, the argument for a Select Committee to shadow each Department is keen.

If matters are put to a vote, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will support the amendment selected. The second amendment, which relates to Sub-Committees, is the second best option. If the amendments are not carried, we will, reluctantly, support the motion, but it, too, is a second best option. We hope that the House will change its procedures sooner rather than later, so that we can do the proper job for which we are elected to this place.

10.5 pm

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Hon. Members have argued the case strongly, though they have been soft on the Leader of the House, who has let down the House by the way in which he dealt with the issue tonight.

I have no doubt that consultations took place through the usual channels. But in a matter such as this, the Leader of the House would have done well to remember that Back Benchers are not part of the usual channels, nor are the vast majority of political parties represented in the House. Had that consultation gone more widely, we might not be faced with a situation in which there can be a Select Committee report in favour of retaining the Select Committee on Energy, and a motion signed by 88 Members, yet the House does not have the opportunity tonight even to vote on the specific question of whether there should be a Select Committee on Energy to scrutinise energy policy.

Most disgraceful of all, the Leader of the House does not have the guts to allow the matter to be decided by a free vote. After all, the issue is about the rights of Back Benchers to scrutinise Government. Not only do the

*[Mr. Alex Salmond]*

Executive want to control the vote to decide how they are scrutinised, but they will not let the matter be decided by those who are present and taking part in the debate. In all those matters, the Leader of the House has not served himself or the House well.

The arguments in favour of having a Select Committee on Energy are extremely powerful. The Leader of the House is not in a strong position—given the experience of not having a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs for the last five years—in saying that Select Committees must inevitably parallel Government Departments. If, over the past five years, the Government were prepared to have a Department and no Select Committee, they can hardly now argue that we cannot have a Select Committee and no Department.

It would be a simple matter to have a Select Committee on Energy without a Department of Energy. The disappearance of the Department does not mean that the areas to be scrutinised disappear with it. As the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) ably demonstrated, those areas remain and the work of the Select Committee remains to be done. Safety in the nuclear, coal and offshore oil industries and the consequences of electricity privatisation remain to be scrutinised by the House of Commons, yet we will not have the ability, because of the abolition of the Select Committee, to scrutinise them properly.

I agree that a Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry would be only a second-best answer. Let us be under no illusions about how limited the ability of such a committee would be to scrutinise energy matters. The hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, will recall that, towards the end of the last Parliament, that Select Committee had to meet twice a week to conduct its business, and that happened before the President of the Board of Trade had expanded the powers of the Department of Trade and Industry.

**Mr. Hoyle:** In those days the President of the Board of Trade was called the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I pointed out in an intervention the difficulty that will confront us if, in addition to the matters that will have to be looked into by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, other items concerned with energy must be addressed. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman is underlining my earlier remarks and is reinforcing what was said by the distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy. One hopes that our words will be taken into account, particularly by Conservative Members, should the matter go to a vote.

**Mr. Salmond:** Many hon. Members will be looking forward to the President of the Board of Trade grandstanding it in front of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. It is to be hoped that that Committee will be able to prick that bubble somewhat when it examines his policies. As we know, that Select Committee was overworked in the last Parliament. It will not now, either of itself or by way of a Sub-Committee, be able to give adequate scrutiny to energy matters.

We have already had the example of how, at Trade and Industry Question Time, energy questions have been relegated to fewer than a third of the questions answered. The best that can be hoped for from the Select Committee on Trade and Industry is a similar percentage of time going to energy issues. Who will do the work that was done in the last Parliament by the Select Committee on Energy?

The Leader of the House was kind enough to say that the Select Committee on Energy had been successful. That hardly seems a reason for abolishing it—except of course that it might be convenient for the Government to abolish successful committees of scrutiny. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman meant that the Energy Select Committee, its members and its able Chairman were far too successful for their own good, for the sake of their own survival. But it is parliamentary scrutiny that will be lost. Anyone looking at the history of decision-making and energy policy will realise that that will have an impact on Government decisions. The Government themselves will be losers as a result of clumsy and careless decisions not being adequately scrutinised by an Energy Select Committee.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Although I am not unsympathetic to the excellent argument that the hon. Gentleman is deploying, may I ask him whether he accepts that the system that we have operated since 1980 is based on a report of the Procedure Committee in 1978? The new Government of 1979 acted on that report, and the new departmental Select Committees came into being in 1980. The present system is based on recommendations of a Committee of the House. I accept that those proposals resulted in Government recommendations, but ultimately it is up to the House to decide what sort of Select Committees it should have. If the House is prepared to exercise its authority—it could if it so chose—the argument that the leader of the Scottish National party is advancing might well be implemented.

**Mr. Salmond:** I am familiar with the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred—indeed, I mentioned it in an intervention. The hon. Gentleman, as an experienced parliamentarian, will have scrutinised the Energy Select Committee's report on this question. We faced this point directly and pointed out that in 1978 the Select Committee on Procedure argued not that Committees need monitor Government Departments exclusively but that they should do so "primarily". Most certainly it did not seek to prohibit the flexibility for which we are now calling in respect of this issue of energy policy, which is sufficiently distinctive and important to have a distinctive scrutiny Committee.

Unfortunately, given the procedures of the House, there does not seem to be a method of forcing the matter to the vote, even if only for the satisfaction of being outvoted by people who are currently engaged in watching the tennis, sitting in the tea rooms or giving constituents the benefit of their assistance. We shall not even have an opportunity to make a last stand—no doubt a gallant but futile stand—on behalf of the Energy Select Committee. So much for Parliament, when we do not even give ourselves the ability to make a declaration about what should be done.

The Energy Select Committee was one of the very few bodies which took very seriously the positions of both Northern Ireland and Scotland, areas that did not have Select Committees in the last Parliament. Although the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and I were committed in advancing the Scottish cause, we would not

have been able to have so many Scottish subjects brought forward for examination had it not been for the willingness shown by other members of the Committee.

The Energy Select Committee also took on the job of scrutinising electricity privatisation in Northern Ireland. I thought that it was disgraceful that, although every Northern Ireland Member, from whatever political party, was against, or at least had grave doubts about, the direction of electricity privatisation, they did not themselves have the ability to question and scrutinise in respect of that vital policy matter. It was the Energy Select Committee that stepped into that breach.

I want to make a final appeal to the Leader of the House. I hope that in his summing up he will have the imagination to show that he realises that something rather important is about to be lost unless he is prepared to make a concession to the House of Commons to show that he is aware of the strength of feeling among members of every political party represented in the Chamber. The Energy Select Committee has performed a vital function, and it should be allowed to continue to do so.

10.14 pm

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): I did not intend to speak in this debate, but, having been called, I shall be brief.

I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the house for moving the motion and for the way in which he responded to the appeals that were made to him during business questions in successive weeks. Having said that, I have to point out that we have a very unsatisfactory situation. Parliament will resume in October after the summer recess, so, realistically, it will be November before any Select Committee is fully operational and engaged in scrutinising the work of its Department.

Hon. Members from all parties will accept that a Government who are not scrutinised are liable to go wrong. It is the legislature's duty to scrutinise the Executive—not to carp or criticise unnecessarily, but to examine, monitor and sometimes assist. It is wrong that this Parliament, which was elected on 9th April, met for the first time on 27 April and had its state opening on 5 May should be considering this motion on 30 June. There must be another way in another Parliament.

I believe that we should think of a mechanism. After all, we have four or five years in which to do so. The first step that a Parliament takes is to chose its Speaker. Immediately after the Speaker has been elected, Deputy Speakers are appointed. We then have four people whom the House trusts to balance debates. The responsibility lies with Madam Speaker and her Deputies to decide who will speak in debates, to try to ensure that all arguments are properly advanced and that every point of view, however unpopular, has an opportunity to be heard. All of us, individually and collectively, have great confidence in our Speaker and those who assist her.

It may be appropriate, in a new Parliament, for Madam Speaker, assisted by her Deputies and the Chairman of the Selection Committee—if he or she has been returned to Parliament—immediately to sit down within a stated time limit of 28 days after the first meeting of Parliament and set about choosing those who will serve on Select Committees. Obviously, they will take advice from people in the usual channels. I do not suggest that the usual channels do not have a proper part to play—they do—but I believe that the status, standing and stature of the Select Committees can only be increased if they are chosen by a Committee presided over by the Speaker.

We should consider this matter along those lines during the life of this Parliament, so that when a new Parliament is elected we do not have that long and, frankly, potentially dangerous gap. It is wrong that several months should go by before Ministers can be asked to give evidence, civil servants can be summoned and those in other walks of life can be called to give evidence. I earnestly commend to the House a reconsideration of the process so that there is a strict time limit and Select Committees are fully operational within a couple of months of Parliament meeting—28 days for selection and then they get down to work. I commend a procedure along those lines to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

10.18 pm

**Dr. Jeremy Bray** (Motherwell, South): I wish to ask the Leader of the House questions about the Science and Technology Select Committee, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has already asked. I hope that the Committee does not suffer from the disadvantages that my hon. Friend fears. The list of ministerial responsibilities defines the Chancellor of the Duchy as being

"also responsible for the Office of Science and Technology, which, in addition to responsibility for government policy on science and technology, is responsible for the science budget and the five Research Councils".

He is responsible for the science and technology policy of the Government, not just for its co-ordination or over-view.

Select Committees are bound by their terms of reference, but page 618 of Erskine May states clearly:

"The interpretation of the order of reference of a select committee is, however, a matter for the committee."

There are ample precedents for that being exercised in the past.

The chief scientific adviser already sees all the Government Departments when they prepare their public expenditure estimates for research and development, and has subsequent meetings with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to review departmental proposals on research and development. Presumably it is open to the Chancellor of the Duchy to take over that role from his chief scientific official. Certainly officials of the Departments of Trade and Industry and of Education, and the Ministry of Defence, could be summoned to the Select Committee on Science and Technology, as I am sure that they will be. If that Committee conducts itself properly, other Ministers may ask to appear. I am not sure whether it would be wise for the Committee to allow them to do so.

For example, an inquiry by the Royal Society into the epidemiology of bovine spongiform encephalopathy may come up with damning proposals which make the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food squirm. It would be for the Committee on Agriculture to deal with him, but the objective evidence on what is happening in the epidemiology of BSE should be clearly spelt out by the Select Committee on Science and Technology. That Committee has a valuable additional role to play. I am sure that it will carry it out and that hon. Members from all parties will be able to contribute to it.

10.22 pm

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): I wish to make some brief comments on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I am sure that I need not remind the House that there have been problems in the past; we should not ignore them because we do so at our peril.

It is important when selecting members of a Select Committee to ensure that they recognise their responsibilities to the House. They are Members of the House and their duty is to the House. A Committee member should not be—certainly the Chairman of the Select Committee should not be—an individual whose policy is clearly to challenge the authority of the House and the authority of a Department to carry out the Government's policies. That is an important principle.

I believe that the House should think carefully before it once again finds itself with people who are more determined to break up the United Kingdom than to present reports to the House.

**Mr. Salmond:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? Surely we are discussing not who should be on Select Committees, but whether there should be Select Committees.

**Madam Speaker:** The way in which Select Committees work is of interest and is associated with the motion and the amendments.

**Mr. Walker:** I am speaking about the structure and personnel of the Select Committees. We face problems in different parts of the United Kingdom where there are forces afoot who make no secret of the fact that they wish to break up the United Kingdom and to remove from this Parliament its authority over their part of the United Kingdom. We must address that issue, which is a House of Commons matter and not a Government responsibility. That is why I am addressing the House today.

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): On the subject of those who wish to break up the Union, until now the Government's position on Northern Ireland has been that they will make no decision until the present inter-party talks have made progress and reached a conclusion. The Leader of the House is probably aware that political parties participating in those talks—be they for or against the Union—have agreed that the decision on a Select Committee is not for them, but for the House of Commons. That changes the scene and puts the responsibility right back on the shoulders of the Leader of the House. Does the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) therefore agree that we should have a Select Committee on Northern Ireland?

**Mr. Walker:** It is not my job to answer for the Government, and I shall not do so. My views on how Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales should be treated in this unitary Parliament are well known and I shall not change them. I believe that we should treat all parts of the United Kingdom alike—and that includes Select Committees and everything else.

10.24 pm

**Mr. Newton:** I entirely accept that it is not the task of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) to answer on behalf of the Government. The problem is that I now have little time left in which to do so and I hope that the House will therefore understand if I rattle along.

Some of the remarks made by the hon. Members for Walsall, South (Mr. George), for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and, perhaps most strikingly, for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)—I well appreciate why they were made—were a little grudging when we are proceeding to the establishment of Select Committees significantly faster than after either of the previous two general elections and when I hope and expect that we have paved the way to breaking the log jam on the setting up of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee. The remarks of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan were a little ungenerous, and I hope that he will not mind my saying so.

**Mr. Terence L. Higgins** (Worthing): There seems to be some misunderstanding. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the Committee of Selection settles down to the job, there is still time to set up the Select Committees before the recess so that they can elect their Chairmen and fix their programmes before we rise?

**Mr. Newton:** One of the awkwardnesses of my position, as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has just said, is that today's debate is not about the appointment of members or Chairmen, which is for the Committee of Selection and not something in which I should intervene. But there are at least two more normal meetings of the Committee of Selection, if not three, before the House rises for the summer recess. I am not aware of any deliberate blockage in the usual channels to prevent action being taken following the approval of the motion today. That will represent significantly faster progress than in either of the previous two Parliaments. I would not wish to exaggerate the claim, but contrary to some of the comments that have been made, that is not a bad record.

I must comment briefly on some of the points that have been made, particularly on energy matters and Northern Ireland. In passing, I acknowledge the remarks made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) who rightly drew attention to the width of the responsibilities of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in respect of science.

I fear that, as the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), would expect, I can say little more to him than that the Government's position on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee is well known. In principle, a Select Committee concerned solely with the work of the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments may be desirable, but we believe that the right way to carry forward consideration of that matter is in the context of the talks which are continuing—*[Interruption.]*—and their outcome. The fact that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has been present during the debate is an acknowledgment of the strength of feeling which exists, but I am not in a position today to add to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and others have said on a number of occasions.

I paid tribute earlier to the work of the Energy Select Committee, but the question is whether it is appropriate, on an ad hoc basis, to depart from the central core of the foundation on which Select Committees have operated in the House for well over a decade. I cannot recommend that

we should do that today; nor can I recommend to the House that it would be appropriate to set up a Sub-Committee. Some compelling arguments against that were put by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). I entirely accept that energy is important and I hope that the Trade and Industry Select Committee will afford it the importance that it deserves in balancing consideration of the subjects that it should choose for inquiry. I am not convinced, however, that the interests of energy, the House or the Select Committee on Trade and Industry would be served by giving it the Sub-Committee power proposed in the amendment.

I cannot recommend either of the amendments, but I hope that the House will approve the motion and let us get on with the job of setting up the Select Committees.

*Amendment proposed:* (f) in line 14, at end insert—

'by inserting the words—

" . Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Office 16 6".'.

—*[Mr. Molyneaux.]*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 28, Noes 201.

**Division No. 46]** **[10.28 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Llwyd, Elfyn
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
Maginnis, Ken
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Salmond, Alex
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Watson, Mike
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. William Ross, and**
**Mr. Simon Hughes**

**NOES**

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Bayley, Hugh
Bellingham, Henry
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushf)*
Connarty, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hoon, Geoff
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Hutton, John
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Keen, Alan
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Alice
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickthall, Colin
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tipping, Paddy
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Nicholas Baker and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Amendment accordingly negatived.*

*It being more than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion,* MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [26 June], put forthwith the Questions which she was directed to put at that hour.*

*Amendment proposed:* (h), in line 39, at end add

'and in line 19, after the word "Committee", by inserting the words—

"the Trade and Industry Committee (in respect of matters relating to energy)".—*[Mr. Grocott.]*

*Question put*, That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 67, Noes 179.

**Division No. 47]** **[10.40 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Connerty, Michael
Dixon, Don
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hinchliffe, David
Hoon, Geoff
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliot
Paisley, Rev Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Ms Barbara
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon D. *(Strangford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Tyler, Paul
Watson, Mike

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Robert N. Wareing and**
**Mr. Ken Eastham.**

**NOES**

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

**Tellers for the Noes**
**Mr. David Davies and**
**Mr. Nicholas Baker.**

*Amendment accordingly negatived.*

*Main question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That Standing Order No. 130 (Select committees related to government departments) be amended:

In the Table:

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '3. Education, Science and Arts | Department of Education and Science; Office of Arts and Libraries | 13 | 3' |

and inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '3. Education | Department for Education | 11 | 3' |

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '5. Energy | Department of Energy | 11 | 3' |

by inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. National Heritage | Department of National Heritage | 11 | 3' |

by inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. Science and Technology | Office of Science and Technology | 11 | 3' |

in the third and fourth columns of the entry relating to Scottish Affairs, by leaving out '13 5' and inserting '11 3'

by leaving out the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '14. Treasury and Civil Service | Treasury, Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (but excluding the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise | 11 | 3' |

and inserting the words—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| '. Treasury and Civil Service | Treasury, Office of Public Service and Science (but excluding the Office of Science and Technology and the drafting of bills by the Parliamentary Counsel Office), Board of Inland Revenue, Board of Customs and Excise | 11 | 3' |

In paragraph (3):
by leaving out lines 14 to 17.

## PETITION

## Wyther Park Primary School, Leeds

10.51 pm

**Mr. John Battle** (Leeds, West): I present a petition that is the result of the work of the Wyther Park primary school in my constituency. The pupils carried out an environmental project, tested the quality of the water in the River Aire and found it to be badly polluted. They joined 12 other schools in the Kirkstall Valley area and, to their great credit, organised a petition of well over 5,000 signatures.

The petition reads:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House insists that the money paid to Her Majesty's Government and to Yorkshire Water by the people of Leeds, be used immediately to ensure that the water is clean and safe as it runs through the Valley and the City.

*To lie upon the Table.*

*[Mr. John Battle]*

## Furness Peninsula

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

10.52 pm

**Mr. John Hutton** (Barrow and Furness): This is my first Adjournment debate and I doubt, however many years I represent my constituency, I shall ever speak to the House on more profound and important matters affecting the welfare and livelihood of my constituents.

My constituency has always been a great centre of British engineering industry, and in the past 120 years, we have built some of the finest ships ever to sail under the red or the white ensign. The words "built in Barrow" have, over the past 100 years, been recognised worldwide as a mark of engineering excellence.

The ships that we have built include the famous Strath class of ships, the Oriana cruiser which was launched in the 1950s, which was 42,000 tonnes in weight, the Methane Princess, which was one of the first liquefied gas tankers launched in Britain, and the first 100,000-tonne tanker, the British Admiral. Vickers in Barrow also built the first Royal Navy submarine, has completed the Polaris and is well advanced on the Trident submarine programme. It also constructed the first nuclear submarine for the Navy. Some of the more famous ships that we have built for the Navy are HMS Sheffield, which was tragically lost in the Falklands conflict, the first of the new class of aircraft carriers, HMS Invincible. That is a fantastic record of achievement.

Unfortunately, our ability to continue that fine record is now at serious risk. Since 1990, my constituency has suffered from the combined effects of the recession and the rundown in defence spending. Over the past two years, unemployment has doubled. It is now nudging 10 per cent. of the work force and may rise as high as 25 per cent. during the next three years. Over the past two years we have seen the end of apprenticeship training at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. in Barrow and 5,000 jobs have been lost at the shipyard. Four hundred jobs were lost when the British Cellophane factory closed in 1991, and 800 jobs were lost at the Scotts paper mills. Three hundred jobs were lost when Listers yarn mills closed in 1990. Hundreds of other jobs in small and medium sized companies have also been lost over the same period.

There are very few job vacancies at the Barrow and Ulverston job centres. I was advised today that there are only 251 vacancies in my constituency. However, 4,300 people are now registered as claiming unemployment benefit. That is a ratio of one vacancy for every 17 people registered as unemployed. In May, 31 per cent. of school leavers in my constituency registered as unemployed at the Barrow careers office. That figure represents 276 of my 16-year-old constituents.

People live in my constituency under the constant fear and threat of losing their secure employment. The Minister for Industry must imagine what it must be like for many thousands of my constituents who have to live and work under those conditions. In May, 357 redundancies were announced in Cumbria, and of those, 314 were in my constituency. There is now a steady flow of jobs away from Barrow. It is almost no longer newsworthy when more redundancies are announced in my constituency.

Many of my constituents are considering employment elsewhere in the country and even as far away as Europe. That is a desperate situation, and no Government of whatever party can sit back for much longer and continue to do nothing about it.

The problems in my constituency have been compounded by two further factors, the first of which is our geographical isolation. My constituency is approximately 40 miles from the M6. As yet, we have no proper fast road links to the motorway. We also have, and continue to suffer from, poor rail links to the main west coast main line. We no longer have a direct inter-city connecting service.

The other factor that has compounded our problems is our historic dependence on one large employer—VSEL. The nearly 8,000 jobs that have been lost in my constituency will be difficult to replace. There is concern across the county of Cumbria that those job losses could trigger a wider loss of confidence in the region leading to a cumulative process of decline. That would be a desperately severe blow for my constituents.

As the Minister prepares his response to my speech, I want him to consider the fact that, for many generations, my constituents have responded to the needs of this country. We have been proud to work for, and to deliver and build ships, for the Royal Navy for the past 100 years. It was a duty and a privilege to serve the country in that respect. I believe that we are entitled in our hour of need to tell the Government that we need assistance and support to cope with massive changes that are affecting employment in the defence industries.

I want also to draw to the Minister's attention some of the numerous strengths of my constituency. We face a difficult situation, but it is important for the Government to recognise the massive potential and the great strengths of my constituency. We have a highly trained and skilled work force who are without parallel or equal anywhere in the country. We have and enjoy a wonderful geographical setting. It is a beautiful constituency, nestling in the foothills of the Lake district. On the Project Furness site we have some ideal factory premises and space for new inward investment. We face a serious problem, but we also have tremendous potential.

What, therefore, should be the Government's response to our predicament? The response requires the Government to think strategically. They should recognise the strategic asset that VSEL is for Britain. It is not just a shipyard: it is a tremendous and wonderful centre of engineering excellence. I want and need the Government to recognise that fact and take the appropriate action to save the tremendous reservoir of engineering skills that exists in Barrow.

The Government must recognise that market forces alone are not capable of responding to the predicament that my constituents face. The very problems that we face have been created by market forces and the decline in ordering and work from the Ministry of Defence. The MOD has been our principal customer for almost 40 years. Market forces cannot satisfactorily address the issues that face my constituency.

Will the Minister consider establishing Furness as a pilot project for a national policy on diversification? It is significant that the United States and German

Governments recognise that the success of defence diversification requires a positive response from the Government. I believe that diversification is the greatest challenge facing the engineering industries in Britain. Companies such as VSEL in Barrow do not have sufficient financial resources to adapt to and deal with some of the problems.

Crucially, the Government must also accept that the right response involves granting assisted area status to my constituency. It requires new training initiatives and new transport investment. I draw the attention of the Minister to the work that Cumbria county council has done in supporting the work of economic consultants who have examined the case for transport investment in Furness and in particular the need for a modern dual-carriageway link to connect south Cumbria to the M6. I believe that the estimated cost would be £195 million. That would be more than offset by the reduced unemployment reduced travelling time in shipping and moving goods and the reduced accident rates that would clearly follow from improving the A590.

The A590 is a nightmare for those who have to use it on a regular basis. I am advised by the Cumbria constabulary that, in the past four years, there have been 41 fatalities on the road. That is the loss of one person every month. That is carnage, and it should not be allowed to continue.

We also need the Government to provide substantial support for Furness Enterprise. It is a small organisation trying to do a big job and it needs extra resources which only the Government can provide. In short, I ask the Government to develop a specific response to the problems that my constituency faces. We need an effective regional policy which addresses the needs of constituencies such as mine including those of my hon. Friends who are present tonight and those of Conservative Members, which face the consequences of the running down of defence spending.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) wants to make a short speech in my Adjournment debate, and I am happy to give him that time. To summarise, we are going through extremely difficult times in my constituency. For decades, we have been happy and willing to be available to build the ships that the nation's defences have required. We are proud of the contribution that we have made to the Royal Navy and to the defence of Britain. We are fully entitled and justified at this crucial juncture in turning to the Government for practical assistance.

We simply cannot cope on our own with the severe consequences of the running down of defence spending.

11.2 pm

**Mr. Michael Jopling** (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on his good fortune in drawing the Adjournment debate in the ballot tonight and on choosing this topic. I thank him for his courtesy in allowing me to make a short speech.

I agree with a great deal of what the hon. Gentleman has said; perhaps I can be allowed a few seconds to endorse some of his comments. My constituency comes close to Barrow and many of my constituents work in the engineering industry in Barrow. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is a centre of great engineering excellence and expertise. As the peoples of the free world rejoice that the cold war has come to an end, they should not forget the problems that that causes for places such as Barrow. One day we may need that expertise again. I therefore hope that the expertise in Barrow and the surrounding area will be given every encouragement to continue.

I was delighted to be able to congratulate the Government in the House a year ago, on their early response to the problems by setting up the Cumbria action team. I agreed with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness, when he urged the Government to keep up the momentum. It is crucial, and I hope that the Minister will give us that assurance tonight.

I endorse the remarks made by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness about communications. The road from the M6 to Barrow is diabolical in places. If the Minister cares to visit my constituency, I shall drive him on that appalling road, part of which goes through a farmyard. It is scandalous that an area of such great excellence and expertise should be served by such a lamentable road. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us tonight that urgent steps will be taken to improve the road system, which is so important in helping industry in Barrow and its potential to continue to make a huge contribution to the well-being of this nation, as it has done for so many years.

11.6 pm

**The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury):** The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) have done the House a service in bringing an important subject before us this evening—the future of the economy of the Furness peninsula and the effect that the rundown of the defence industries will have on the area.

As my right hon. Friend recognised, my Department has been closely involved with the area for the past 15 months, and we have already been able to take some action to assist in the task of diversifying the economy, to which the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness referred.

The area has traditionally been heavily dependent on manufacturing industry, particularly iron and steel, and it continues to have an unusually high percentage of its jobs in manufacturing. In 1989, manufacturing employment in Barrow, as a proportion of total employment was 48·4 per cent., which was more than double the normal 22 per cent. for Great Britain as a whole.

As the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness said, in the past decade the shipyard has provided considerable prosperity for the area and has been by far its largest employer. In 1989, employment in the Barrow travel-to-work area was about 17 per cent. higher than it had been at the beginning of the decade. That represented about 7,000 new jobs. At the beginning of 1990 Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. employed 17,000 people, which was approximately 50 per cent. of the total working population of the Barrow travel-to-work area and represented about 60 per cent. of Barrow's male working population. Nothing could be a clearer sign of the importance of the company to the town of Barrow.

In addition, a number of other firms in the area are important contractors or sub-contractors to the defence industry. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the area's success in that demanding industry is evidence of the skills and expertise available locally. I recognise that, as a result,

*[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]*

the area is highly dependent on the defence industry and, in particular, on the scale of operations at VSEL. Nevertheless, the skills to which the hon. Gentleman referred—such as sophisticated design capabilities, electronic engineering and advanced welding techniques, will be a significant asset as the area seeks to attract new business.

In that respect, I am aware of the considerable local interest in assisted area status. The current assisted areas map was drawn in 1984. At that time, there was no justification for assisted area status for Furness, because the unemployment rate was 10·8 per cent., which was significantly below the then national average of 13·2 per cent. I am sure that everyone locally is aware of the announcement of a full review of the map. The period to the end of September has been allowed for public consultation. I can assure the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness that the Government are well aware of the problems facing the area and will take them fully into account in the review.

I am also aware that in March 1991, following the Governments's introduction of "Options for Change", VSEL announced a programme of major restructuring to take place in the next two to three years. The plan was to diversify operations by seeking new business to compensate for the loss of submarine manufacture. Nevertheless, even with a moderately successful diversification programme, a considerable rundown in employment levels at the shipyard was envisaged. The redundancies were, in part, to be aimed at increasing productivity and efficiency, but they also recognised that the shipyard's manpower requirement would be reduced as a result of the cut in defence orders.

My Department recognised the serious effect that that new strategy would have on the area and moved quickly, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale acknowledged, to take steps to lessen its impact. We were able to contribute to a comprehensive study, which was carried out by the consultants, Segal Quince Wicksteed. It concluded that there were several key measures required to bring about the necessary diversification of the economy. They included improved communications, to which reference has been made, new factories and sites, enhanced education and tourism facilities and, in the longer term, designation of assisted area status.

We followed that report up on 13 June 1991 when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced to the House a package of special measures for Furness and west Cumbria, based on some of the report's findings. That package was designed to enable the areas to begin the process of regeneration, recognising the potential job losses both at VSEL and further up the coast at Whitehaven, through the completion of major construction projects at Sellafield.

I remind the House that that package included a £15 million programme to be undertaken by English Estates to provide new factories and sites in Furness and west Cumbria. The Cumbria action team was also set up in Barrow and west Cumbria in order to work with local interests in developing an effective response to the problems facing the area. The action team was provided with a special fund of £1 million, to be used to bring forward projects to support the redevelopment of the economy.

Another part of the package was a high-level group to co-ordinate Government action in the area and to ensure effective liaison between the main economic departments. That group has met each quarter in Cumbria with representatives of the key local interests in order to ensure that that process is achieved. I understand that the next meeting will take place in Barrow tomorrow.

I believe that the action that we took 12 months ago was appropriate to the problem and extremely timely. English Estates has moved swiftly to begin the building of new units on the Project Furness site, a site which had been previously reclaimed using an £8 million derelict land grant from the Department of the Environment. The first set of premises with a total area of 4,200 sq m will be available for occupation in the late autumn. I was also pleased that we were able to secure some £1.5 million from Brussels under the PERIFRA scheme last year. That additional money will enable further construction work to be undertaken in Barrow. In particular, we shall be building a managed workshop complex to a high standard, aimed at encouraging the development of new small businesses in the town.

To assist that process further, the action team has recently formed a £100,000 joint loan fund with Barclays bank, which will operate in Furness for new small businesses and will enable them to obtain the necessary loans to commence their ventures. Those loans will be at preferential rates and will not require excessive security. We are also taking steps to support the newly established tourism development programme in Furness because we believe that that too, represents opportunities for new sources of employment in the area.

In total, assistance offered to date in Furness under the action team's special fund amounts to £130,000. That is on top of my Department's normal programme support, which has included assistance totalling £245,000 under schemes to encourage technology transfer and the development of innovative new products or processes.

Those and other measures which we have introduced within the past 12 months are, I believe putting in place the necessary economic framework upon which the area's future will be based. Quite clearly it will be necessary for jobs to be created in different sectors from those traditionally dominant in the area, but I believe that there is a real opportunity for that to happen. We have made a good start in providing the right help to the area.

I recongnise that the area faces a continuing major challenge and that the unemployment position is deteriorating. At present, about 15 months after VSEL's announcement and 12 months after the establishment of the special measures to which I referred, the rate of unemployment in the Barrow-in-Furness travel-to-work area stands at 8·5 per cent. That is still below the national average of 9·5 per cent. I recognise, of course, that the situation will change as more redundancies occur, but this illustrates that the measures that we have taken have been in good time to tackle the problem.

My Department has therefore played an important part in the work to date, but it is not a task for Government alone. It is essential that there should be a highly effective public and private sector co-operative effort in Barrow and

Furness to tackle the problems effectively and to market the undoubted strengths of the area, particularly the skills to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Indeed, it is important not to overlook the fact that the area has considerable advantages, not least the high quality and reliability of its skilled work force, and there is the beauty of the area, to which reference was made. In that respect, we welcomed last year the setting up of Furness Enterprise as a local body to co-ordinate activities on a public and private sector basis. We look forward to building on that foundation in extending the partnership, particularly across the private sector.

The special package is in addition to my Department's normal assistance measures for small and medium-sized enterprises, such as the consultancy initiatives, export assistance and technology schemes. I am aware also that in recent months there has been a feasibility study into the advantages which an enterprise zone would bring to Barrow and Whitehaven. The consultant's report on that study is currently being considered by Government Departments.

As hon. Members will appreciate, the action team's activities are not confined to my Department's interests. Other specific projects which are proceeding and which will assist the area include the construction of the Dalton bypass, which will provide welcome relief for the road difficulties to which my right hon. Friend graphically referred. That bypass is now well under way and, when completed in the autumn of 1993, should provide a considerable improvement to the area's link to the M6, which is at present far from satisfactory. I also know that the local development agency, Furness Enterprise, has exciting plans for the construction of a comprehensive maritime technology centre, which would take advantage of the area's high-tech skills by introducing new research and development work in marine and offshore matters.

That could lead to the attraction of new companies interested in developing modern products in the Furness maritime technology environment. To develop that idea, I am announcing tomorrow support from the action team's special fund for a feasibility study which will enable that interesting idea to be thoroughly evaluated.

Another important measure which will enhance the attraction of the area and stimulate local trade will be the redevelopment of Barrow's shopping centre. The first steps towards that major project have been taken by the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has approved a derelict land grant of £4 million to enable the necessary preparatory work to take place.

Furness is fortunate in being a particularly beautiful part of England with attractive coastal scenery and adjacent to the lake district. I believe that given that background and the skills to which reference has been made, the development of a high-tech maritime and offshore engineering culture and the improvement of the physical appearance of the town centre will make major contributions towards the task of attracting new sources of employment.

My Department will, of course, continue to play a full part in the stimulation of inward investment. We shall work in conjunction with local agencies and private business. I am pleased that the action team is heavily involved in developing the Cumbria marketing initiative which will be launched in September and which will promote the attractions of the whole of Cumbria, including Furness. I am sure that, with good will, leadership and effective partnership all around, Furness will be able to return to the more satisfactory levels of employment that it enjoyed in the past decade.

I think that what I have said should demonstrate to the hon. Gentleman that my Department has been far from inactive. We launched a major special package for the area over a year ago. We had identified and recognised the problem. We have active programmes across a wide range of activities, and all of these are contributing to the relief of what I recognise is a serious local problem.

To summarise, I recognise the serious problems facing the economy of Furness. My Department has already taken action by announcing, in June 1991, the special package of measures. The needs of Furness will be taken fully into account in the assisted areas map review, and I am pleased to announce that I am planning to visit Barrow in August to see for myself the work that is being undertaken and to meet the people involved in it. I look forward to that visit.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 1 July 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

LEEDS SUPERTRAM BILL

*Read the Third time, and passed.*

PETERHEAD HARBOURS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

*Considered; to be read the Third time.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Trinidad and Tobago

1. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Trinidad and Tobago.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd):** United Kingdom relations with Trinidad and Tobago are good. Several ministerial exchanges have taken place in recent months.

**Mr. Steen:** Is the Minister aware that I have just returned from Trinidad and Tobago, where I led a delegation on behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association? Representatives of 26 Commonwealth countries were there. They are concerned about what their relationship will be with this country post-Maastricht. As this is the first day of Britain's assumption of the presidency of the European Community, will my hon. Friend reassure the Commonwealth, whose ties with Britain go back far longer than those with the European Community, that relationships with the Commonwealth will continue to be excellent and, most important, that the British Government will do everything that they can to ensure that the favoured trading conditions continue and expand, not only with Britain but with all European Community countries?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I share my hon. Friend's appreciation of the value of the Commonwealth and of the CPA in particular, which plays an essential role in reinforcing the ties between Commonwealth Parliaments and parliamentarians. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to our ties with the Commonwealth, which are long and deep. We have worked hard to achieve the best possible trading arrangements for the developing countries of the Commonwealth within the framework of the Lomé convention, and we shall continue to do so.

### Purchasing Policy

2. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy on purchasing; and what priority he gives to British suppliers.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad):** In accordance with Government guidelines, the policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is to purchase goods and services on a value-for-money basis and in accordance with our international obligations. British suppliers are used where they are competitive on quality, price and delivery.

**Mr. Spellar:** I thank the Minister for his reply, but will he comment on reports that the British ambassador to the United Nations has traded in his British-built Rolls-Royce for an American-built Lincoln Continental? What image does he think that gives to British industry and what hope does it give to British car workers? Can he imagine any other car manufacturing country that would behave in a similar fashion?

**Mr. Goodlad:** The Rolls-Royce is the finest car in the world. It will succeed in international markets, regardless of whether Her Majesty's ambassador in Washington abides by the criteria that I described. I am delighted that he does.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Does my right hon. Friend, whom I welcome to the Dispatch Box, have regular discussions with Her Majesty's Treasury about seeking value for money in the procurement of items for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office? What is the view of his Department's officials, who have to make the decisions, about the directive to impose on the United Kingdom a minimum level of value added tax of 15 per cent? At some future date they would surely welcome a VAT rate below 15 per cent., as would all of us, but that, apparently, is precluded for the next four years.

**Mr. Goodlad:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words, and I welcome his interest in VAT. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is spending £164 million in the current year on buying in goods and services. In the context of the increased globalisation of international trade, it is difficult to calculate the detail of that expenditure with the precision that both my hon. Friend and I would like, but I am sure that he will be as interested as I was to know that it is estimated that more than 85 per cent. of the expenditure is with British-registered companies.

### Nuclear Tests

3. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will implement a moratorium on United Kingdom nuclear tests.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones):** No. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made clear, the United Kingdom has a continuing requirement to conduct a minimum programme of nuclear tests to maintain the safety and effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent.

**Mr. Etherington:** On 8 April the French Government decided to impose a moratorium on nuclear testing and, following that, President Mitterrand made an offer to negotiate with other countries willing to go along the same lines. Also, expert opinion in the United States believes that nuclear testing is not necessary to maintain the value of nuclear deterrents. In view of all that, when can we expect the Government to start acting in a positive and constructive manner, or will we continue to stand on the sidelines and wait to see what happens?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** France's nuclear-testing requirements are matters for the French Government and the moratorium has no direct bearing on the United Kingdom's policy. The United Kingdom's test programme in Nevada is conducted in accordance with the 1963 partial test ban treaty. It is minimal and poses no threat to the environment or public health.

## Thailand

4. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Thailand.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Her Majesty's Government were horrified by the events in Bangkok in mid-May, about which we expressed serious concern at the time. We look to the inquiry which is now under way to identify those responsible and to take action. We wish to maintain friendly and constructive relations with Thailand. We welcome the appointment of an interim Government and the announcement of new elections on 13 September.

**Mrs. Prentice:** We all welcome the fact that the new Prime Minister has promised elections in the next few months and I am pleased that the Minister has condemned the atrocities that took place in May. However, does he also condemn the amnesty that has been granted to those behind the slaughter of unarmed demonstrators, and will he assure the House that the Government will do all in their power to pressurise the Thai Government to use the investigative committees to bring to justice those responsible for the atrocities? Does the Minister agree that no new regime can be credible unless the guilty people in the army and the Government are brought to trial?

**Mr. Goodlad:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her comments. Her Majesty's Government will continue to make our views known forcefully to the Government of Thailand.

## Hong Kong

5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when was the last visit by a Foreign Office Minister to Hong Kong to discuss the democratic rights of the people of Hong Kong.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** The Minister of State—my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad)—visited Hong Kong in May. I hope to visit Hong Kong from 26 to 28 July.

**Mr. Banks:** Why are the British Government trying to distance themselves from the democracy movement in Hong Kong? Do the Government stand by the view that 30 members should be directly elected to the Legislative Council by 1995? Is it not true that the best defence for the people of Hong Kong would be full democarcy by 1997, not pieces of paper exchanged between the Chinese and British Governments?

**Mr. Hurd:** That depends on whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is important that the arrangements in 1995 should continue after 1997. We do. We have said that we shall discuss the 1995 elections with the Chinese, with the aim of ensuring as much continuity as possible. The new governor will be going out there this week. He will want to consult widely and put his views to us. That will take him some time, so I shall not announce any decisions on this matter when I go to Hong Kong at the end of this month.

**Mr. Adley:** Is it not a fact that fewer than 10 per cent. of those eligible to register to vote actually did so and that the main winner in the election was the apathy party? That being so, will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is Her Majesty's Government's view that the best interests of the people of Hong Kong continue to be served when the relationship between Britain and China is better rather than worse?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is highly desirable. There is a wide range of views in the House and in Hong Kong on the subject of the 1995 elections. Many different views are expressed by people from Hong Kong who come to see me. Mr. Patten must consult widely when he gets there, weigh up the views and the different factors, including the one that my hon. Friend mentioned, and then let us have his advice.

**Mr. Skinner:** When the Foreign Secretary goes gallivanting to Hong Kong, will he call on the Hong Kong business man whom the Prime Minister met just before the general election? Taxpayers' money, supposedly, paid for the flight. When the Prime Minister got to Hong Kong, all he was bothered about was raising money for the Tory party and getting money from Hong Kong business men. Is the Foreign Secretary going to do the same?

**Mr. Hurd:** I expect to keep in touch on Hong Kong matters with a range of opinions, including business opinion in Hong Kong.

**Mr. Churchill:** Was not the principal failure of the 1919 treaty of Versailles that it rode roughshod over the democratic aspirations of many peoples? Can my right hon. Friend name any other instance in modern times when a colonial power has handed over a colony to another power in defiance of the wishes of the local people? What has happened to the hallowed principle of self-determination?

**Mr. Hurd:** As my hon. Friend knows, we are following the agreement that was reached in 1984 with the Chinese Government. That and subsequent agreements arrange for a steady increase in the directly elected members of LegCo. That, of course, has never happened before under any British Government or under any Government in Hong Kong. Eighteen members were directly elected in 1991 and 20 will be elected under the Basic Law in 1995. It is that second figure which we need to discuss. I hope that my hon. Friend does not believe that the issue depends entirely on the number of directly elected members. There are

other constituencies in Hong Kong in LegCo, and the new governor will want to consider the range of the subject, not just the number of directly elected members.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Is the Foreign Secretary aware that we welcome the robust declaration by Chris Patten to the Chinese, which was widely reported today, to keep their hands off Hong Kong for the next five years while we retain responsibility? However, will the Foreign Secretary guarantee that when the Chinese put the heat on and try to blackmail us on issues such as the airport, he will stand firm behind Chris Patten and maintain our right to appoint members—whoever we wish—to the Executive Council, to extend democracy by extending direct elections to the Executive Council and to bring into force a system that protects human rights not only for the next five years, but well beyond? We have that responsibility to the people of Hong Kong and we must exert it fully over the next five years.

**Mr. Hurd:** The three matters that the hon. Gentleman mentioned are within our jurisdiction under the agreement and under the joint declaration between now and 1997. Not only the new governor but the Minister of State—my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury—have made it plain to the Chinese that, in particular, appointments to ExCo are a matter for the governor, with my approval.

## Maastricht Treaty

7. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to renegotiate the terms of the Maastricht treaty.

**Mr. Hurd:** As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in the House on 25 June and 29 June, the Maastricht treaty was negotiated in good faith by all member states and we intend to stand by it.

**Mr. Byers:** Does the Secretary of State agree with the comments made yesterday evening by the Prime Minister that the United Kingdom presidency of the Commission provides a priceless opportunity for the Government to set the European agenda? If he agrees, will he accept that that will entail positive steps being taken by the Government? One popular measure would be the endorsement by the Government of the protocol in the Maastricht treaty on the social chapter. Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that such popular measures are essential to stem the tide of opinion inside the House and in the country, which is clearly running against the Maastricht treaty?

**Mr. Hurd:** I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on both points. If we followed his advice, the results would certainly be unpopular and would even more certainly destroy jobs in this country.

**Mr. Rupert Allason:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that article 236 of the treaty of Rome would appear to invalidate any treaty of Maastricht that excluded the Danes? Does he agree also that there can be no question of the British Government letting anybody down over the treaty of Maastricht, and that no one could ever be accused of breaking his word, given that it is the sovereign right of this Parliament to make such a decision?

**Mr. Hurd:** Of course that is right. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister went to Maastricht with the terms that he asked for and later obtained. Those terms were approved in advance by the House of Commons, and they were again approved when he returned from Maastricht.

My hon. Friend is right about article 236. I do not see how one could imagine the treaty of Maastricht entering into force without the assent of the Danes. What the Danes have done is to come to us following their referendum and to ask for time. That is their right. Time has been granted to them and we must wait until the autumn to see what suggestions and ideas they bring forward for resolving the matter.

**Mr. George Robertson:** Will the Foreign Secretary face the fact that, in so far as it relates to the United Kingdom, the Maastricht treaty is, to coin a phrase, an opt-out too far? Does he accept that if he abandoned the social chapter opt-out, which would require no renegotiation of the treaty, he could at one stroke benefit millions of British workers and, in addition, give the Danish electorate a signal of real change in the Maastricht treaty? Such a move would also have the bonus of irritating alarmingly at least one lady down the Corridor.

**Mr. Hurd:** If we did that, we should also be abandoning British business and people——

**Mr. Robertson:** No.

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman should ask the CBI. In particular, we should be abandoning people who are unemployed and looking for jobs and those now in employment who would lose their jobs if the regulations were applied in this country.

**Mr. David Howell:** I fully endorse my right hon. Friend's policy of building on our version of the Maastricht treaty rather than destroying it or throwing it over. But will my right hon. Friend undertake in meetings with the Commissioners, today and in future, to make it clear that, when it comes to redefining the functions of nation states and Community institutions, the nation states and not the Commissioners should do the redefining and decide who does what?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is right, and the treaties have come to pass through the agreement of member states. In the Lisbon conclusions last weekend, what we were asked to do, and what we began to do in conversations with the Commission this morning, was to take the doctrine of minimum interference or subsidiarity—whatever one likes to call it—and start putting it into practice in advance of the treaty of Maastricht and in advance of ratification. That will mean a great deal of work by the Commission and by us during the British presidency, in identifying how we can make that doctrine not just a principle in a future treaty but something that guides the daily life of the Community in terms of future proposals and decisions already on the Community statute book.

## Sudan

8. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the Sudan.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg):** We maintain diplomatic relations with Sudan, but our relationship is not an easy one. Our main concerns are the regime's record on human

rights, its apparent lack of resolve in combating international terrorism, its failure to co-operate in the provision of humanitarian aid and the need to make progress towards more accountable Government acceptable to all parts of the country.

**Mr. Wardell:** What initiatives or help are the Government making available to end the tragic civil war in Sudan, and what contacts or meetings have we had with democratic political movements in that country?

**Mr. Hogg:** The truth is that we have precious few levers with the Government of Sudan. I welcome what the Nigerians have been doing in persuading the parties to hold discussions in Abuja, and we hope that those discussions will be profitable. We also make our views clear to the Government of Sudan on every possible occasion—including today, here.

**Mr. Colvin:** My right hon. and learned Friend must be aware that the talks in Abuja ended without any positive result. Does he accept that any talks aimed at solving the problems of the civil-war-stricken country of Sudan must seek a solution that is based on multi-party democracy, a secular state and a constitution that enshrines human rights and individual rights? Surely, as the old imperial power, the British Government must have some opportunity to instigate talks. Perhaps the Government could talk to their partner from the old imperial days—Egypt—about instigating such talks.

**Mr. Hogg:** We must face the fact that the Government of Sudan are difficult. The objectives that my hon. Friend has outlined are entirely right. We want to see a multicultural, multilingual, pluralistic society in Sudan that is committed to democratic institutions, but our ability to bring that about is remarkably limited. For example, we do not give developmental aid to the country because of its past policies. Our ability to persuade the Government of Sudan to do that which is right is less than we should like.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Will the Minister bear in mind that there are many refugees, both internal and external, in Sudan? They live in the most desperate poverty in great danger to themselves. They suffer a severe degree of ill health. In those circumstances, is he prepared to reconsider the statement that he just made about aid to Sudan? Will he consider whether humanitarian aid can be sent to refugees who are the victims of civil wars throughout the region for which they bear no responsibility?

**Mr. Hogg:** The hon. Gentleman is right, but I said that we gave no developmental aid to Sudan. We have in place a humanitarian aid programme. We have contributed more than £53 million in humanitarian relief to Sudan since the beginning of the present food crisis in 1990. We make a distinction between developmental aid, which we do not give, and humanitarian aid, which we do give.

## South Africa

9. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made towards democracy in South Africa.

**Mr. Hurd:** Before the negotiations were suspended, the Convention for a Democratic South Africa had made remarkable progress in securing agreement on transforming South Africa into a non-racial democratic society. That makes all the more tragic the recent increase in violence. I remain convinced that the interests of the majority of South Africans are best served by concerted efforts to put the negotiations back on track as quickly as possible.

**Mrs. Lait:** May I please begin by mentioning that my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) is missing from his place in the Chamber today because he is organising the parliamentary plunge on behalf of Macmillan nurses, which is well on the way to raising a substantial sum of money for that well-known charity.

Following the tragic events in the beautiful and sad land of South Africa, does my right hon. Friend agree that mutual trust is at the heart of any peaceful settlement? What concrete examples does he have of ways in which Britain can help the parties in the dispute?

**Mr. Hurd:** It is clear that the problem of violence lies at the heart of the difficulty and mistrust. That is why we are keen to help Judge Goldstone and his commission of inquiry into public violence and intimidation. Dr. Waddington of Reading university is helping the commission in its work. I can tell the House that, in addition, two senior Metropolitan police officers, Commander Tom Laidlaw and Detective Superintendent David Don, are going out to South Africa to help Judge Goldstone with his work. That is a practical example of how we can help to curb the violence and thus reduce the mistrust.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Is the Foreign Secretary aware of the awesome scale of the disaster that may face South Africa as a result of the breakdown of the negotiations? As a matter of urgency, will he activate a decision taken by the European Council to send the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Portugal and the United Kingdom—the troika—to South Africa to investigate what is happening? The Foreign Secretary will learn there at first hand of the desperate need of the people of South Africa for outside intervention and influence to resolve matters.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am in touch with the South Africans about that. For example, I telephoned the South African Foreign Minister last night. At the right time and with the right purpose, a visit by the troika of Ministers—which I would lead—could be useful. I am anxious to do it at the right time, in a way that will help to bring people back to the conference table, and not merely as a prestige gesture.

**Sir George Gardiner:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the cause of democracy in South Africa is ill served by those who would pin all blame for the breakdown in negotiations on one party? The obvious answer is to get the talks going again as soon as possible. Will my right hon. Friend further confirm that the British Government wish the outcome of the talks to be a constitution in which all racial groups can play their part, and that it would not be in our interests for South Africa to slide down the road to one-party rule?

**Mr. Hurd:** It is clearly for the parties who have been sitting round the negotiating table in South Africa to decide among themselves what their country's future constitution should be. It is tragic that they made a lot of progress, as my hon. Friend knows, and were separated by

a narrow but important difference, before trust was undermined and the conference temporarily suspended as a result of the violence. I confirm that the answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's question is yes.

**Mr. Hanson:** In condemning the recent violence in South Africa, would the Secretary of State impress upon the South African Government that the patience of the African National Congress is running out? Does he agree with the view expressed in early-day motion 347 that a re-imposition of the sports boycott on South Africa would be appropriate to show international condemnation?

**Mr. Hurd:** Everyone has to show patience and it is a bad sign when people start talking about patience being exhausted. Great reserves of patience will continue to be needed in South Africa—not for apartheid, but for the difficult business of replacing it with a democratic constitution. A sports boycott would not be a good idea. It is for sporting bodies to decide and not for Governments, but to start to go down that weary road again would give entirely the wrong signal.

## Kosova

10. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to recognise the republic of Kosova.

**Mr. Hurd:** We have no plans to recognise the republic of Kosova.

**Mr. Waterson:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that the 90 per cent. ethnic Albanian population in Kosova have been regularly and cruelly oppressed by the Serbian military and police, and that in a recent poll—with turnout of approximately 80 per cent., which is creditable by our democratic standards—99 per cent. of the population voted for autonomy?

**Mr. Hurd:** And that surely must be the right answer. I agree with my hon. Friend. As he says, Kosova is largely inhabited by people of Albanian origin, but it is also regarded by Serbs as the heartland of their country. A few months ago Lord Carrington's peace conference suggested the same answer as my hon. Friend—full autonomy.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** While accepting the Government's reservations about the employment of ground forces in the Balkans, if it becomes clear that combat aircraft and Royal Navy ships are necessary to achieve the purpose of the United Nations, will the Government make such resources available to the UN?

**Mr. Hurd:** We are considering, almost daily, in the Security Council and with our partners in Europe and in NATO, what help we can give, first with the humanitarian air lift. Our planes are standing by, ready for the go-ahead which the UN has asked us to await before we start to send supplies to Sarajevo. We have to look ahead——

**Mr. Skinner:** The question is out of order.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am answering the supplementary question of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). We have to look ahead, and I am sure that we would play our part, although not with ground troops, in any future UN plans for humanitarian relief.

**Mr. Wareing:** I welcome the Foreign Secretary's answer to the orginial question. I advise caution before making the same mistake in prematurely recognising Kosovo as we made with Croatia and Bosnia. Does he realise that to give in to those who want Kosovo to be recognised prematurely would simply send the same message to the minority Serbs in that region as was sent to those in Croatia? They would fell that they had been abandoned, and such action would play into the hands of the extreme Serbian nationalists in Belgrade.

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not want to add to what I have said about Kosovo. On Croatia, which was one of the republics of the former Yugoslav federation, there was an argument about timing, but I am sure that it was not wrong to recognise it. Last week, we followed up that action by establishing full diplomatic relations with Croatia, which I hope that the hon. Gentleman would consider to be right. I hope to name the first British ambassador in Zagreb soon.

## Cyprus

11. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the continued occupation of northern Cyprus by Turkish troops; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** My right hon. Friend recently met a delegation from the friends of Cyprus parliamentary group. He has received 10 letters on this subject this year. The problem of foreign troops in Cyprus is likely to be resolved only within an overall settlement of the Cyprus dispute. Recent proximity talks in New York chaired by the United Nations Secretary-General went well and will resume on 15 July. Dr. Boutros Ghali has expressed confidence of success, given the necessary political will from all parties. We continue to be active, both bilaterally and through the Security Council, in working to encourage progress.

**Dr. Spink:** What help has Britain given to the United Nations to try to broker a settlement to the illegal occupation of northern Cyprus by Turkish troops?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** My hon. Friend is right that the United Nations offers the best hope of progress. It provides the necessary authority and impartiality to encourage the two communities to reach a mutually acceptable and lasting solution. The United Kingdom attended the talks at senior official level at the express invitation of the secretary-general. We have continual contact with all parties while trying to assist them in reaching an equitable settlement. We aim to remain particularly involved because of our status as a guarantor power.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** As Greece, like Turkey, also has troops in Cyprus in excess of the number allowed by the treaty of guarantee, what representations has the Minister made to Greece about its occupation troops in southern Cyprus?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** I believe that a resolution of troop numbers and all the issues that are so difficult in Cyprus will take place only in the context of an overall solution. We are working with the United Nations Secretary-General to achieve such a solution. The difficulty to which

the right hon. Gentleman has drawn our attention is one of many that we would seek to resolve within that overall solution.

**Mr. Stephen:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus is necessary for the protection of the Turkish Cypriots since international guarantees failed to protect them from massacre by Greek Cypriots in 1963, 1967 and again in 1974?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** There is no doubt that a significant reduction in Turkish troops in northern Cyprus would improve the climate for a negotiated settlement. However, as I said to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor), that is unlikely to take place other than in the context of a wider solution.

**Mrs. Roche:** Given the continuing occupation by Turkish troops, what representations has the Minister made to the Turkish Government about the fate of the missing people, some of whom have families living in my constituency?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** A few days ago, accompanied by one of the hon. Lady's hon. Friends, I received in the Foreign Office a group of Cypriots acting on behalf of the missing people. The hon. Lady is absolutely right: this is one of the most tragic aspects of the whole Cyprus dispute. What we can do is to continue to work as closely as possible with the United Nations to bring about the overall settlement within which I think that this problem would be resolved.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that most of those missing persons were killed by the Greek Cypriots?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The United Nations committee for missing persons has found it extremely difficult to obtain proper evidence from either side of the argument. I revert to the answer that I have given to other hon. and right hon. Members—this is one of the many tragic problems which will be resolved only in the context of an overall solution.

**Mr. Kaufman:** Will the right hon. Gentleman, in the most specific terms, allay the fears that have been expressed to me from authoritative quarters in Cyprus that in the current talks pressure is being put on the legitimate Government of Cyprus to make concessions that would water down the sovereignty of that official Government? Will the Minister state very specifically indeed that the British Government will not be a party to any settlement of the Cyprus problem unless that settlement is absolutely acceptable to the present legitimate Government of that country?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** I repeat that our view of the way forward rests firmly on the concept of one country, two communities.

## European Union Treaty

12. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to arrange for the essential elements of any treaty on European union to be circulated to every household.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The Government have no plans to do so. Copies of the treaty on European union and of the memoranda produced by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Her Majesty's Treasury are available to members of the public from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

**Mr. Gill:** My right hon. Friend will be aware of the precedent in the previous Parliament whereby certain aspects of Government policy were brought to the attention of every household. If the treaty on European union is in the best interests of the British people, why is my right hon. Friend so keen to stifle wider public debate by refusing the public a referendum and denying them the essential information on which to reach their own conclusions?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** I do not think that the accusation of stifling debate on this matter can be levelled against this House, the press or the British public.

**Mr. Spearing:** Will the Minister tell us why the Government, for the second time, are blocking the progress of the European Union (Public Information) Bill? What are his objections to the principles of that Bill? Can it be that he is afraid of the expenditure? Will he consider putting down a money resolution? Surely the expenditure involved would be a far less than that involved in the 19 charters, including the one just mentioned.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** Unless I am mistaken, the Bill to which the hon. Member refers has been introduced at the back of the Chair. The fate of such Bills tends to lie in the hands of my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary, rather than in my hands.

**Mr. Cormack:** Will my right hon. Friend think again about the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill)? Does he accept that many of us who are not Euro-sceptics believe that there is a great deal to be said for thoroughly informing the people of this country about the benefits of Maastricht?

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** Of course I accept what my hon. Friend says. The Government have to judge very carefully. In the first instance, I am sure that the House will accept that copies of the Maastricht treaty were made available to the House quickly and in large quantities. Given the way in which the debate is developing, the Government will have to consider whether it would be in the interests of the House and of the country at large to make further information about the many benefits of the Maastricht treaty available to a wider public.

## EC Presidency

13. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the priorities of the British presidency of the EC.

16. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom current policy priorities for the EC presidency.

**Mr. Hurd:** The House will debate that question tomorrow. We aim to complete the single market; make progress toward limiting the scope of Community interventions; complete future financing negotiations; prepare for enlargement of the Community; conclude, if possible, the GATT Uruguay round; and build stronger

relations with central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. All those matters were usefully discussed with the Commission in London this morning.

**Ms. Quin:** In view of the right hon. Gentleman's comments to the European Union of Women yesterday, is he worried that his priorities for the United Kingdom presidency will be blown off course by political spivs dressed in ermine?

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Lady is getting her news from headlines. I would not have dreamed of calling anyone in either House, or outside, a spiv or a gazumper. What I was criticising was the suggestion that the Prime Minister should have put himself in that position.

**Mr. Dykes:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that to understand how the Community works some Members of this House, as well as people outside, could also do with an information pack? After recent hysterical attacks on the European Commission, will the Government remind hon. Members that the Commission—including the two British Commissioners—speaks with one voice and that the Council of Ministers of sovereign member states makes the decisions which are supplied and proposed by the Commission unless it is delegated legislation? It is a weird notion that some hon. Members on both sides of the House feel that the European central bank should be in London but that we should not join European monetary union.

**Mr. Hurd:** That question is an intriguing mix. It is important to make it clear that the Commission proposes and the Council of Ministers decides. What both the Commission and the Council need to do now—after the meeting in Lisbon and before they begin to discuss the merits of any proposal within the Community's competence—is to work out whether it is for the common good that the Community, rather than nation states, should do that. Unless it is clearly for the common good, it should be left to nation states.

**Mr. Ernie Ross:** Will the Secretary of State ensure that, during the British presidency, one of the highest priorities is given to support for the new Government of Israel and its determination to have a continued dialogue towards resolving the conflict there? Will he also take the opportunity, on behalf of the House, to wish the new Israeli Government every success when it is formed? I am sure that all hon. Members are pleased that that Government have won on their policies. Both Jews and Arabs in Israel have voted for policies which ensure that territorial compromise is the name of the game. We wish them every success in that continued dialogue.

**Mr. Hurd:** That is gracefully expressed by the hon. Gentleman, who has a keen and continuing interest in the Palestinian problem. We shall do our best during our presidency to support the peace process and I join the hon. Gentleman in hoping that it will now resume with renewed impetus.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** To deal with the high level of fraud in the European Community, particularly in relation to the common agricultural policy, will my right hon. Friend ensure that the provisions of the Maastricht treaty which deal with the extra powers given to the European Parliament to investigate the European Commission are carried through successfully?

**Mr. Hurd:** Indeed, it is important that the provisions in the Maastricht treaty that enable the Parliament and, indeed, the Court of Auditors to do more, should be put into effect. We see no contradiction between that and the exercise that I have already described of restricting Community institutions' scope for intervention.

**Mr. Kaufman:** Consequent on the right hon. Gentleman's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), will the Minister express the anger of this House at the admission by the outgoing Prime Minister of Israel that he deliberately intended to sabotage the Madrid peace process? Will the right hon. Gentleman offer his congratulations to Mr. Rabin, not only on his excellent victory, but on his stated determination to speed up the talks with the Palestinians to try to achieve a settlement as quickly as possible? Above all, will he congratulate the electorate of Israel on voting to rescue the true identity of their country?

**Mr. Hurd:** I have not seen Mr. Shamir's statement, so I cannot comment on that. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has sent a warm message of congratulations and support to Mr. Rabin. We hope that the Government of Israel will be able, with the co-operation of others, which is also necessary—I am thinking of Syria and Palestine—to set the peace process going again with renewed impetus. That is important for us all. What was the right hon. Gentleman's last point?

**Mr. Kaufman:** My last point was about the decision of the Israeli electorate.

**Mr. Hurd:** On the whole, I am in favour of congratulating electorates, particularly our own.

## EC Foreign Policies

14. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European Community foreign policies.

**Mr. Hurd:** I meet my European Community partners regularly to discuss the strengthening of intergovernmental co-operation on foreign policy.

**Mr. Knox:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Maastricht treaty will enable Britain, through Europe, to exert much more influence in international affairs and thus protect British interests much more effectively?

**Mr. Hurd:** What the Maastricht treaty does in that respect is to underline and strengthen the co-operation between member states of the Community in foreign affairs. It takes foreign affairs out of any possible conveyor belt into integration with the Commission's monopoly of initiative and the jurisdiction of the court. Like my hon. Friend, I believe that that is the right framework in which Community members should conduct their essential work together on foreign policy.

**Mr. Galloway:** Will the Foreign Secretary try to convince the other Community Foreign Ministers to condemn the decision of the Government of Norway to resort to international piracy by walking out of the International Whaling Commission, which is meeting this week in Glasgow in my constituency? Does he agree that

Norway's decision to return to the killing fields, thus turning the oceans of the world into bloodbaths with the tracking and butchering of those beautiful and important creatures, makes Norway singularly unsuitable for membership of the European Community?

**Mr. Hurd:** My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has made our position clear before the conference. We shall seek to persuade others, inside and outside the Community, that our position is reasonable and right.

**Mr. Bellingham:** Will my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary turn his attention to the letter in today's edition of *The Times* from the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Dr. Karadzik, explaining why they have initiated a ceasefire? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an extremely welcome development?

**Mr. Hurd:** Of course I do. I congratulate *The Times* on resuming something of its ancient role in receiving such letters from all over the world. What counts is not the letter to *The Times* or radio broadcasts to the same effect, but whether the policy works on the ground. That is being tested in these hours. I hope, as the United Nations hopes, that within the next day the United Nations commander, General Mackenzie, will be able to tell us and others that as a result of the decision to which my hon. Friend referred Sarajevo airport is open for a regular flow of supplies. We shall then send in our supplies. It will clearly be important to continue that flow, to ensure that the road to Sarajevo is open and that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross can distribute supplies in Sarajevo. I hope that my hon. Friend is right and that the letter in *The Times* and similar statements elsewhere will lead to the permanent relief of Sarajevo.

## Cambodia

15. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the peace process in Cambodia.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Much progress has been made towards the implementation of the comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict. The United Nations transitional authority in Cambodia—UNTAC—was established on 28 February; repatriation of those Cambodians now in camps on the Thai-Cambodian border is continuing and the international community has pledged some $880 million of aid to help reconstruct Cambodia. We remain concerned, however, at the continuing unwillingness of the Khmer Rouge to co-operate with UNTAC.

**Mr. Mullin:** Given that the failure of the Khmer Rouge to co-operate was predicted and predictable, does the Foreign Secretary regret that Britain went along with the Governments of China and the United States in sustaining the Khmer Rouge for a long period in the 1980s? Does he agree that sooner or later the Khmer Rouge will have to be confronted?

**Mr. Goodlad:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman, who I know takes an interest in these matters, is historically less than his usually accurate self. We did not sustain the Khmer Rouge. We remain concerned by its unwillingness to co-operate with UNTAC, notably in moving to phase 2 of the ceasefire, and we have registered our concerns with the Khmer Rouge, most recently in the declaration that I made at the international conference on the reconstruction of Cambodia in Tokyo last week. It is vital that all factions work fully and unconditionally with UNTAC so as to move to phase 2 of the ceasefire as planned. We are determined to exert the maximum pressure on the Khmer Rouge to comply with its commitments under the Paris accords. The Supreme National Council will meet in Phnom Penh tomorrow to assess the situation. Thereafter, the United Nation's Secretary-General's special representative will report to the secretary-general and the Security Council. Together with our international partners, we shall then need to consider what further action is required.

**Mr. Bowis:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we can keep pressure on the Khmer Rouge only if the peacekeeping forces are provided with adequate troops? Can he confirm that the promises from the United Nations have now been fulfilled, because if the United Nations cannot control the Khmer Rouge the people of Cambodia certainly cannot and we shall be back to the real killing fields of Cambodia all too soon?

**Mr. Goodlad:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is intended that UNTAC should consist of just under 16,000 military personnel, 3,000 police, and up to 4,000 civilians, together with 60,000 locally recruited personnel. The cost are estimated at just under $1·7 billion. The deployment of UNTAC is on course, and most UNTAC troops are now in the country.

## South Africa

17. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with representatives from South Africa on the progress of dismantling apartheid.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We maintain a close dialogue with all the parties in South Africa. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister keeps in contact with President de Klerk and Mr. Mandela. We are also in close touch with Chief Buthelezi.

**Mr. Pike:** As the former Prime Minister said in this House that the Government of post-partheid South Africa would have to be acceptable to all the people of South Africa, will the British Government make it clear to President de Klerk that when negotiations resume after their suspension it is crucial that the power of veto be overcome? The veto must not preserve apartheid and privilege in a different form in post-apartheid South Africa.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** It is precisely because the future Government of South Africa must be accepted by all the parties there that this question is a matter for the Convention for a Democratic South Africa to decide. It would be quite wrong of me to comment on the matter.

**Mr. Temple-Morris:** As part of this process, is my hon. Friend entirely satisfied that the South African security forces are doing all that they can to police the Zulu hostels in the townships? If he shares my concern about that—it is widely shared—will he communicate it to the South Africa Government?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** It is clearly most important that the South African security forces should police those areas in the way that my hon. Friend has described. The South African Government are in close contact with my right hon. Friends, who have discussions with them on these points.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** Does the Minister agree that unless Her Majesty's Government make it clear to the South African Government that the South African security forces must be wholly divorced from political incitement to violence—that is the only way in which anyone can ever begin to negotiate—there will be a tradgedy to which the inaction of the British Government will have contributed?

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary dealt extensively with that point. Obviously, the escalation of violence is the real and terrible problem in South Africa which is preventing meaningful negotiations. My right hon. Friend said that he was in touch with the Foreign Minister of South Africa only yesterday and discussed the very matters to which the hon. Lady has drawn attention.

## Lithuania

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about relations between Britain and Lithuania.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** Our relations with Lithuania are very good.

**Mr. Marshall:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that good relations require efforts by both countries? While welcoming our Government's steps to improve relations with Lithuania, may I ask whether they will make representations to the Government of Lithuania about their failure to compensate my constituent Mr. Salt for the value of property in Lithuania expropriated in 1940?

**Mr. Hogg:** My hon. Friend has a point. He puts the case for his constituent extremely persuasively and has corresponded with me on more than one occasion. There are problems in that Lithuania's domestic legislation puts a barrier in the way of his constituent's claim. However, I shall see what we can properly do to impress on the Government of Lithuania the consequence of their prohibition.

## VSEL (Redundancies)

3.30 pm

**Mr. John Hutton** (Barrow and Furness): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration.

Today my constituents have learnt that another 1,000 jobs are to be lost at the Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. shipyard. Those are on top of 5,500 jobs that have been lost in the shipyard since 1990, and brings the total of jobs lost there this year to 2,000. A particularly disturbing and worrying aspect of this round of redundancies is its impact on young people in my constituency, because 250 of the 1,000 jobs that are now to be lost are the jobs of young people who are completing their apprentice training this year. These young men and women are just starting on their careers, and this is a devastating blow to them and their families.

The situation facing my constituents is now so grave and serious that it merits an emergency debate. Many hon. Members will know that my constituency has an historic reliance on one employer VSEL. No other jobs are available for my constituents, and they and the south-west Cumbrian economy as a whole simply cannot sustain such job losses. I am fearful of the effect that the redundancies will have on the fabric of life in my community. After many decades of loyal service to the defence needs of the United Kingdom, my constituents deserve better treatment than this.

We need an immediate opportunity to hear the Government's response to this latest crisis affecting my constituents. Today marks a turning point in the life of my constituency and in the lives of many thousands of my constituents. I earnestly hope that you will accede to my request, Madam Speaker, and give my constituents the chance to let their voices and feelings on this matter be heard in the House.

**Madam Speaker:** I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have to give my decision on the matter without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. Therefore, I cannot submit the application to the House.

## Points of Order

3.33 pm

**Mr. Tony Marlow** (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I regret making points of order on two days in a row, but my point of order today is totally different. You will remember that up to a few years ago on Foreign and Commonwealth Office questions we had about 20 minutes for questions about the European Community. Things changed and there were reasons for that at that time. As you realise, the issue for debate in the House above all others and the issue for debate in the country is Europe. Is there any way in which a slot for European questions could be reintroduced?

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker, and before you answer it, perhaps I can help.

**Madam Speaker:** The ever-helpful Mr. Skinner.

**Mr. Skinner:** The hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. Marlow) is absolutely right. Time used to be allowed after half-past 3 for Common Market questions. One reason for the change was that the Tory Government at that time were very much in favour of everything that happened in the Common Market. That was when the previous Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, was pushing through the Single European Act with a guillotine. Everyone on the Government Benches seemed to think that everything in the Common Market garden was fine and lovely. They decided therefore to get rid of that question time. It is interesting that, now that the Tories are split down the middle, they want it restored. I am prepared to give them a chuck on.

**Madam Speaker:** I do not think that right hon. and hon. Members should delay the business of the House on points of order of which I am already very well seized. Both hon. Gentlemen know that their points of order concern a matter that is for the Government, not the Chair.

## Secret Societies (Declaration)

3.35 pm

**Mr. Chris Mullin** (Sunderland, South): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require that an occupant of, or candidate for appointment or election to, a public office or a post in a public service shall make a public declaration as to his membership or otherwise of any secret society; and for connected purposes.

My Bill seeks to ensure that candidates either for appointment or election to public office should declare their membership or otherwise of any secret society. It will require also that the record of any such declarations is made available to the public.

The Bill should appeal to democrats of all political persuasions. It does not seek to ban anything or to discriminate against anyone. It is based on the simple principle that membership by public servants of secret societies is incompatible with democracy and undermines public confidence in public institutions.

For those who fear that a declaration of membership of a particular organisation could result in discrimination, I shall include a clause that outlaws discrimination against anyone on the basis of any declaration that they have been obliged to make under the Bill.

Although no particular organisation is mentioned and the scope of my Bill is not limited to any particular organisations, you, Madam Speaker, may not be surprised to learn that freemasons will be among those who fall within its scope. A number of speeches made recently by senior masons were designed to persuade the public that masons have entered an era of glasnost. I may add that this does not extend to masons being willing to appear with me on "The World at One" to discuss the issue. This afternoon, a request was made to the Grand Lodge to provide a spokesman, but the answer was no. I regret to say that the BBC, with characteristic gutlessness, therefore cancelled the interview.

Leading masons have been at pains to emphasise that freemasonry is a bit of harmless fun and that its objectives are mainly sociable and charitable. It would be easier to convince non-masons of that were it not for the secrecy—reinforced by blood-curdling oaths—to which all masons are sworn.

I want to stress that the Bill makes no objection to the practice of freemasonry. If grown men want to wear aprons, bare their breasts, and indulge in strange rituals, that is entirely a matter for them. I object to the secrecy, and to the corrosive effect that it has on public confidence in many of our most respected institutions.

It is said that there are about 320,000 masons in England and Wales, 100,000 in Scotland and 55,000 in Northern Ireland. The nearest that we have to a definitive account of their activities is Martin Short's excellent book "Inside the Brotherhood". Its author suggests that freemasons are particularly well represented at all levels of the legal profession, in the police up to the highest level, in local government, places of higher education, and among hospital consultants. There is even a lodge in the House of Commons, membership of which, I understand, includes the hon. Members for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) and for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), and a number of Officials of the House. There is also a lodge for the Press Gallery—about which considerably less is known than of the New Welcome lodge to which Members of Parliament and Officials of the House belong.

According to the 1991 masonic handbook for County Durham—which for masonic purposes includes Sunderland—Sunderland has 29 lodges with a total membership of 1,597. There are also various other masonic bodies, including eight royal arch chapters with a membership of 390, Master Masons with 24 members, Royal Ark Marines with 31, the Rose Croix with 59 and Proceptories—do not ask me what all this means, Madam Speaker—with 32. Several other masonic bodies do not list the total number of members. They include the Knights Templar Tabernacle, the Royal and Select Masters, the Order of the Secret Monitor, the Harte Conclave and Allied Masonic Degrees.

Lodge 5841 is the civic centre lodge. It has 62 members, and meets at a masonic temple conveniently situated less than 100 yards from the headquarters of the borough council. A number of other officials belong to lodges elsewhere. Some idea of the scale of masonic influence in County Durham may be gained from the handbook, a publication which, while not exactly secret, is not readily available to non-masons. It lists every lodge, in each case giving the number of members and the names of current officers and past masters. The names listed amount to about 10 per cent. of the total membership of each lodge. Altogether, they cover about 250 closely typed pages.

As I look through the names of officers listed for the Sunderland lodges, my eye alights on a number of familiar names—names of people who are or were prominent in local public life. I see the name of a former chief executive of the borough council, and of the late Tyne and Wear county council. I see the name of a former leader of the council—a Tory, I should add. I see the names of former directors of housing and architecture. I see the names of policemen, magistrates and consultants—including that of a consultant whose wife is a magistrate.

In an earlier handbook, I see the name of Mr. Ray Delaney, a former deputy director of engineering in the borough of Sunderland, who was obliged to resign two years ago after allegations of conflict between his professional duties and outside business interests. Mr. Delaney's name is preceded by the letters "IG": I understand from those who know about such matters that they stand for "inner guard". I have no idea what the duties of an inner guard entail, but, if masons are worried about the sinister connotations that non-masons sometimes place on their activities, I put it to them that they have only themselves to blame.

As you know, Madam Speaker, for some years I have taken a particular interest in miscarriages of justice. That interest has brought me into contact with people at all levels of public life in the police and the legal profession, particularly in the west midlands. I make no allegations of impropriety, but one would have to be blind not to notice that many of those with whom I have dealt are freemasons.

In particular, those people include police officers up to and including the rank of chief constable. With the possible exception of the legal profession, there can be few professions in which freemasons are as well represented as they are in the police. That has been widely remarked on, and it is hard to think of anything more damaging to public confidence in the police. I know that it is deeply resented by police officers who are not freemasons.

In April 1985, Sir Kenneth Newman, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, who did more than anyone else to clean up the Met, issued the following guidance to police officers who were freemasons. It appeared in an

*[Mr. Chris Mullin]*

official document entitled "The Principles of Policing and Guidance for Professional Behaviour", and was drafted by Assistant Commissioner Albert Laugharne. He wrote:

"The discerning officer will probably consider it wise to forgo the prospect of pleasure and social advantage in freemasonry so as to enjoy the unreserved regard of all those around him."

Those words might well apply to anyone in public life who is a freemason. My Bill, however, does not go as far as Sir Kenneth. It does not ask public servants to renounce freemasonry; it merely asks them to renounce secrecy.

I believe that this simple measure will enjoy the widespread support of democrats of every political persuasion, and I am confidant that it will find support on both sides of the House. It is entirely consistent with the Government's stated ambition to create a classless society, and is essential to the stated intention of the Home Secretary and the Lord Chief Justice to restore public confidence in the police and the legal system.

My proposal has a good deal of support in high places. In 1986, the author Martin Short sent a questionnaire on freemasonry to every Member of Parliament. Questions 6 and 7 asked whether Members of Parliament and other public servants—including councillors, judges, policemen, civil servants and local government officers—ought to be obliged to declare their membership of masonic bodies. Among those who completed the questionnaire and agreed that public servants should declare was the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), who is now the Prime Minister. I have a copy of the questionnaire that he signed, with his signature at the bottom, and it is available for inspection. I look forward in due course to the Prime Minister's support and help in ensuring that my Bill becomes law.

A great deal of paranoia surrounds freemasonry, much of it no doubt unjustified, and I have no wish to add to it. As I said at the outset, my Bill is based on the simple principle that membership of a secret society is incompatible with office in a modern democracy. Take away the secrecy, and the problem is resolved. I believe that my Bill will have the support of all those who believe, as I do, in greater openness in public life. I hope that it will also enjoy the support of honest freemasons—I am sure that they are the overwhelming majority—who are concerned at the poor public image that their organisation currently enjoys.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Chris Mullin, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Nicholas Brown, Mr. Cyril D. Townsend and Mr. Bob Cryer.

### Secret Societies (Declaration) Bill

Mr. Chris Mullin accordingly presented a Bill to require that an occupant of, or candidate for appointment or election to, a public office or a post in a public service shall make a public declaration as to his membership or otherwise of any secret society; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 13 November and to be printed. [Bill 51.]

## Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill *[Lords]*

*Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.*

### Clause 1

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROVISION OF RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION IN PREMISES MANAGED BY VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS ETC.

3.46 pm

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

'(1A) No arrangements shall be made by virtue of this section with respect to a person being transferred into accommodation from an NHS hospital or trust unless the voluntary organisation or other person concerned has ensured that that person is provided with a care plan and the authority is satisfied that such arrangements will facilitate this plan.'.

The purpose of the amendment is to provide for a clear care plan when individuals are placed in an establishment under the Bill. I shall give the reasons behind the Opposition's concern, and will refer first to the White Paper "Caring for People—Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond". It sets out clearly the national health service's role in providing continuous health care. I refer to the White Paper because my hon. Friends and I believe that the Government's actions do not follow the words of the White Paper. Paragraph 4.20 states:

"There will . . . always be some people who cannot be supported in their own homes. Where such people require continuous care for reasons of ill-health, it will remain the responsibility of health authorities to provide for this."

In practice, that paragraph is meaningless. Continuous care is not occurring in hospitals and other places throughout the land.

There have been huge reductions in the provision of care for the elderly. The national health service is clearly divesting itself of its responsibilities, with, I believe, the implicit blessing of the Government. Figures in the "THS Health Summary" of January 1992 show clearly what the position is. According to that journal, three quarters of health authorities had reported that in recent years they had cut the number of long-stay beds for the elderly. It also stated that closure plans would reduce NHS beds for the elderly mentally ill by 36 per cent. from 1990 levels. Everyone is aware that that number had been substantially reduced before 1990. The plans would reduce other geriatric beds by 25 per cent. and, even counting the private beds that have been bought for the NHS, the numbers would be down by 15 per cent. and 12 per cent. respectively.

There have been many expressions of concern about the implications of that process. The Age Concern report entitled "Discontinuing Care" and published in 1991 shows great anxiety about the attitude of the NHS towards care of the elderly. At that time, the director, Sally Greengross, said:

"Long term hospitals may not have appropriate places for the care these people need, but this does not relieve them of the responsibility to provide and fund care for people who are defenceless and in need of total care."

The Age Concern report showed that some district health authorities now have no provision for elderly people needing continuing nursing care. That is worrying for many patients and their relatives and carers.

The Government say that provision is now in the private sector. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux evidence produced not long ago shows that many patients and their families are never told that NHS funding is available for continuing nursing care. When they have to obtain such nursing care within the private sector, those patients and their relatives are often forced to meet the huge gap between what income support will provide and the weekly cost of the fees. I am aware of many people who have to spend their entire pocket money from their allowances on meeting the cost of care fees. This has been discussed many occasions.

I am concerned about the implications in my locality of the process that I have described. Since 1979, in the Wakefield health authority area, I have seen 1,000 beds removed from the NHS. Those beds were taken from hospitals catering for people within my constituency and were used mainly for elderly people. That shows why we feel that, especially in care for the elderly, there must be care plans for people discharged from hospitals and trusts. Some 200 of those beds in the Wakefield area were in the acute sector. The Government's figures show that about half the people catered for within the acute sector are elderly people.

In my constituency I have seen the closure of County hospital and Snapethorpe hospital in Wakefield, both of which catered primarily for the elderly on a long-stay or short-stay respite basis. The needs of those people are now met primarily, if they are met at all, by carers in their own homes or by the private sector. We know from the Carers National Organisation the struggles that many people have in caring for their relatives or loved ones. The recent report, "Speak Up, Speak Out", produced by the Carers National Organisation reveals the problems. Those who are not cared for within their own homes are placed in private homes. The process in my constituency—it is reflected in every constituency throughout the country—is that NHS provision has been run down or closed and people are shunted into the private sector. If that is not privatisation of the health service, I do not know what is.

At a national level, we are seeing the trend towards shifting the cost of long-term care from the health budget to social security. The National Institute for Social Work produced a commendable report in January 1992. It was entitled "Great Expectations". That report says that the transfer of elderly care from the NHS to the social security budget is feasible

"while the social security budget for such care remains open ended but will present a very different picture when that budget becomes cash-limited on transfer to local authorities in 1993."

There are serious questions being asked about whether the 1993 changes will go ahead as planned. That point may be picked up by my hon. Friends or by some Conservative Members. We are well aware that the options include a further deferment of these proposals or the transfer of the lead agency-purchaser role directly to health authorities either at local or regional purchasing level. That would avoid the local authorities having that lead agency function.

That option has been talked about widely within the care community. Such uncertainties make the need for care plans related to the placement of people directly from hospitals or from trusts even more essential and back up our belief in the need for such plans to be prescribed in the Bill.

Amendment No. 1 refers specifically to trusts as well as to NHS hospitals. We have reasons for including the term "trust". We believe that there is clear evidence of trusts positively obstructing the processes of proper community care planning. I made the point in Committee on the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 that the NHS and community care elements of the Act were contradictory. We are now beginning to see in practice that those of us who made that point on many occasions were correct in our assessment of what was likely to happen.

I give one fairly well known example which explains our belief in the need for the amendment and ties in with the concern about trusts. The City and Hackney health authority, which was slimming down for trust status, shunted about 30 elderly demented patients to a private nursing home called the Pines near Skipton in Yorkshire. That private care home was run by an organisation called Burley Health Care. I asked the Minister where the care plans were in respect of the placement of those vulnerable demented people. The care plans did not exist. That case, along with many others that we could quote, evidences the need for amendment No.1.

The case of those elderly people was exposed by "Panorama", to its great credit. Those people were dumped by a trust applicant and sent up to Yorkshire, where there would be Department of Social Security funding away from the health service budget and away from the area in which they had been brought up and had lived all their lives. They were sent to a strange locality and to a different system of funding. As we know from "Panorama", conditions at the Pines were appalling. Serious questions need to be asked about the role of the City and Hackney health authority and about Airedale health authority.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) in his place today. He was Chairman of the Select Committee on Health, and I normally have a reasonable relationship with him, but on one occasion he ruled me out of order. When we were studying the issue of trusts, I asked a question about the role of Airedale health authority. The hon. Member for Macclesfield will recall that, on 4 March 1992, Mr. Edward Bishop, who was described as "director of healthcare contracting" in the Airedale health authority, gave evidence on trusts. I raised with him the way in which the 30 people from City and Hackney health authority had been treated and the role of Airedale health authority in that respect.

I am not sure that the hon. Member for Macclesfield, for whom I have some respect in his role as Chairman of the Select Committee, fully understood my point. What was clear from the evidence given by Mr. Bishop was that he washed his hands of any responsibility for those people's appalling situation. I quote from Mr. Bishop's response to a question of mine on 4 March 1992 in the Select Committee:

"I have to make it quite clear, there is no role for what might become the Health Authority of residence to play in that we are free as individuals in this country to move from one part of the country to another."

That was his response to the case of people who had been sent from London and dumped in a completely unsuitable, shabby private nursing home in the Yorkshire dales. There was no proper monitoring and no proper care plan.

When Mr. Bishop talks about freedom, he is talking about 30 seriously demented elderly patients who, I

*[Mr. David Hinchliffe]*

suspect, had no choice about moving from London to Yorkshire. On care planning, the key issue is that Airedale health authority was responsible for the registration of the Pines nursing home. It had a clear responsibility, although that was obviously not accepted by the gentleman who gave evidence to the Select Committee. That is one example among many that we could cite to show that the need for clear care plans in the Bill is self-evident.

4 pm

The need for care plans as a result of the creation of trusts is also evident from comments on behalf of other service users. I have spoken primarily of the elderly, but other groups such as the mentally ill benefit from care provision and will be affected by the Bill. In its evidence to the Select Committee, MIND made it quite clear that it saw no incentive for trusts to collaborate with agencies outside the health sector.

In respect of people with learning difficulties—some use the term "mentally handicapped"—with the advent of trusts, the Government have introduced a policy that contradicts the thrust of community care policy over the past 30 years. The Mental Health Act 1959, the 1971 Command Paper "Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped", the 1979 Jay report and numerous reports issued by the Department of Health and Social Security in the 1980s, including "Getting Mentally Handicapped Children Out of Hospitals", were all about the normalisation of care of people with learning difficulties, away from hospitals. They were all about the community. With the advent of trusts, the Government are thus running counter to the trend that has prevailed for the past 35 years. No one seems to have picked that up.

I note with interest the evidence given to the Select Committee by the organisation Values Into Action. The hon. Member for Macclesfield will recall that evidence, which was impressive. According to that organisation, the effect of granting trust status to health service learning difficulties units has been actively to promote the concept that they are the appropriate provider of care for people with learning difficulties, and that those people should be retained in long-stay hospitals. That contradicts the thrust of successive Government policies on community care over the past 30 years.

The Values Into Action report "When the Eagles Fly" substantiates that argument in great detail and clearly shows that the Government's health changes are working against the wishes and best interests of people with learning difficulties. The report states:

"As far as learning difficulties are concerned, the 1990 National Health Service and Community Care Act introduces a direct conflict between ongoing health care, as perpetuated by the new trusts, and the development of community care as the responsibility of social services."

The organisation's worrying comments conclude:

"The overall picture emerging from the research is one of chaos and confusion in services for people with learning difficulties . . . Anarchic is hardly too strong a description of a situation in which service models vary so widely and frequently display disregard for stated public policy."

The organisations that gave evidence to the Select Committee stated clearly that community care is in disarray. The term "anarchic" is used by an entirely responsible national organisation that knows what is happening at grass roots level. It is deeply concerned—as are a vast number of organisations dealing with a whole range of client groups—about where we are heading on community care.

**Dr. Liam Fox** (Woodspring): If there is disarray in the implementation of the community care provisions, it is because left-wing social service units are refusing to take full account of the discussions that they were supposed to have with medical units and so on. Why is it that the Royal College of Nursing tells us that 75 per cent. of carers are not being asked by social services what they should do, that local management committees are not being asked, as the British Medical Association told us last week, and that private homes are having no discussions about how they can be involved in the plans? The failing lies not with Government plans but with implementation by social services.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The hon. Gentleman will get a chance to air his views as the debate continues. It is silly and naive to talk of left-wing councils because there are concerns about local authorities of a variety of political complexions. There are also concerns within local authorities that they have not been enabled to enact the provisions contained in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

If the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) wants to debate the position of local authorities, I am happy to refer him to information in the House of Commons Library which shows that the Government that he supports have taken £6 billion out of local authority personal social services, which is one reason why community care is in such a shambles at local level. I shall be happy to intervene on the hon. Gentleman when he is able to advance his argument in more detail.

In Committee, the Minister responded that we were suggesting interference with the free play of market forces by proposing additional legislation for care plans and a range of other issues that we felt should be covered by statutory provisions in the Bill. The Government's philosophy is clear from their record on community care. It entails abandoning vulnerable people to the free play of market forces. We are not talking—*[Interruption.]*

If Conservative Members do not agree, we can consider what has happened in detail. Frankly, the record of some care homes is abysmal; care is being left to the market. We are not talking about distributing sacks of potatoes, but about human beings. Sacks of potatoes might well be usefully distributed by market forces, but that is not a mechanism to deal with the care of elderly, learning-disabled and handicapped people. It is not the correct model. That is apparent if one studies what has happened in the past decade.

The Bill deals with human beings and they deserve proper treatment—the best treatment, which should be secured by ensuring that appropriate plans are made. They are set out in amendment No. 1 and I hope that the Minister will see fit, just for once, to accept an amendment to the Bill.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who has deployed his case in support of the amendment extremely well. He played a vital and informed role in the previous Parliament as a member of the Select Committee on Health. He drew our attention to an occasion when, as Chairman of that Committee, I was forced to rule him out

of order. He has not advanced all the detail of the incident to the House, but I am sure that he will admit in the mature light of day that I was not out of order in ruling him out of order in what he was seeking to do. Having done so, I was entirely confident that the hon. Gentleman was ingenious enough to secure an even larger audience for his remarks, and he has done so today. I commend him for doing so because, as a Conservative Member, I share his concern. We must ensure that proper, responsible and well-prepared care packages are available for every person discharged from a long-stay care institution into the community.

The hon. Member for Wakefield drew our attention to 30 demented and confused elderly people, who were discharged from a hospital in the City and Hackney health authority to an institution in Skipton, Yorkshire. That is thoroughly undesirable, and I was tempted to intervene when he discussed the matter to ask whether those involved with the 30 elderly people—parents, relations and other close acquaintances—were consulted about whether the elderly people should be discharged to places almost at the other end of the country.

Surely, part of any care package is visiting rights for the friends, next of kin and relations of the people in care. That is clearly important when caring for elderly people. I wonder whether any thought was given to how those who were involved with the 30 elderly people might keep in contact when the group was moved hundreds of miles away to Skipton in Yorkshire.

My hon. Friend the Minister has a splendid history of concern and, dare I say it, involvement in working for vulnerable and minority groups. His involvement with the Spastics Society was well known and respected. Is he worried that the national health service appears to be interested only in treatment and is decreasingly interested in the provision of care? That is a matter about which Conservative Members are gravely worried. I have expressed my anxiety to the Government for a long time, so my hon. Friend the Minister cannot find my position unexpected.

I suspect that I share much of the anxiety expressed by the hon. Member for Wakefield about establishing almost a private sector monopoly in the provision of care for the elderly. Many of us believe that the health service has a role in not only treating but caring for people. We fear that the role is increasingly being discharged to the private, independent or charitable sectors.

I do not suggest that the independent, private or charitable sectors do not have a vital role to play. I believe that they have and that in many instances they can make provision that is supplementary and complementary to NHS provision. I should hate however, to see the provision of care for the elderly, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped fall entirely into private and independent hands. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he will give us some assurances. Those of us who have taken a deep interest in these matters for many years are worried that some of the accommodation provided by the independent sector leaves much to be desired.

We also place in some difficulty the families of people who are discharged from the NHS into the independent and charitable sectors. As the hon. Member for Wakefield said at the beginning of his speech, when people are cared for by the health service all the facilities are provided free. The total cost of the care, the accommodation and so on is covered. When people are discharged from the NHS, however, charges are levied. Whether those charges are picked up by the social security system through income support or in other ways, or whether they are picked up in part by the families, charges are made.

I and many hon. Members on both sides of the House have had traumatic experiences in dealing with families who have come to us about their difficulty in meeting the additional cost, which cannot be met through social security, of care for relatives who have been discharged into accommodation in the independent, private or charitable sectors.

I hope that in this short debate my hon. Friend the Minister will give some assurances, especially to Conservative Members who understand the concept of what the Government seek to achieve. We believe in the concept of community care, which draws considerable additional private resources into the provision of care for the elderly and other vulnerable groups, such as those with learning difficulties. Those additional resources were not available previously. We believe that our policy will provide choice.

The hon. Member for Wakefield always speaks with great clarity, knowledge and experience, but he did not refer to the element of choice. One of the key concepts of community care is the provision of genuine choice for the individual. I wonder whether the system that will operate after 1 April 1993 will provide such genuine choice, which is the essence of a successful community care policy.

I hope that, on this occasion, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be a little more generous and perhaps a little kinder in his response to a very humble Back-Bench Member who feels things deeply.

4.15 pm

**Ms. Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): I support the amendment because it is essential that we have a care plan for those who leave NHS hospitals and trusts. Without such a plan, tremendous difficulties could arise. That plan must be the result of full consultation with everyone concerned. The user, the client, must be consulted or, if that is not possible, that person's relative or advocate should be consulted.

Without a care plan, problems could arise as a result of people being transferred into inappropriate residential accommodation. I accept that large organisations, such as Age Concern, have been consulted and I know that carers in some local authorities have also been consulted. However, smaller voluntary organisations have not had access toomuch of that consultation process.

In Rochdale, I formed the alliance for community care with another person to ensure that smaller voluntary groups were consulted and were able to discuss the care plans for people coming out of NHS hospitals. It is essential that the Bill is amended to ensure that all voluntary organisations are consulted.

Adequate resources must be made available to assist transfers. The other day, I met the Rochdale social services director to discuss the problems that might arise when people are transferred to private or residential nursing accommodation without the necessary resources being made available. In the past, I have drawn attention to the problems caused by the income support levels, which do not meet the costs of residential or nursing home care. Invariably, a patient's relatives have to top up the patient's share of those costs. It is essential that the actual cost of

*[Ms. Liz Lynne]*

residential or nursing home care is met by the Government rather than through income support. The problem is particularly severe in the north-west where more people are in residential accommodation than the population figures would suggest. For that reason, I make a plea for the real costs of such accommodation to be met.

Local authorities of different complexions—Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat—have had problems in attempting to implement all the community care provisions by 1 April 1993. We therefore need a national plan so that each local authority knows what is expected of it. I know that the Bill provides for some planning, but a true care plan for those coming out of NHS hospitals is essential. For that reason, I support the amendment.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson** (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I support the amendment. I was not a member of the Committee that considered the Bill, but I know that the majority of its discussions centred on the transfer of patients out of local authority care into that of the independent sector. I am concerned about the future role of health authority care and the transfer, or non-transfer, of patients who currently receive chronic, long-term residential accommodation and nursing care in the NHS.

I was struck when, in October 1991, I saw the concerns that were expressed in the fourth report of the Select Committee on Social Security. One of these was

"that the obligation on health authorities to provide nursing care for those who cannot or do not wish to pay for it should be strictly enforced and that health authorities should not evade what are properly their responsibilities."

That is an important recommendation, and it is well understood by patients in my constituency who live in one of the few community-based residential nursing homes run by the health authority. It is a small establishment in which there are 30 elderly patients. The staff are most experienced and very well established. The home has close links with the community and the local general practice. I have some personal experience of private and independent sector private nursing homes, having been involved in casework, and I know that the home is a model of what residential nursing homes should be.

When it was proposed that these elderly patients should be transferred from health authority care into the independent sector, it was clear that they understood exactly that the central feature—with which I agree—of the NHS is that it is not free and that they had paid all their working lives for what they were to receive. They were of the view that, having reached the stage of requiring nursing care day and night, they should be entitled to receive it through the health service.

This point must be made strongly. Like Sheffield community health council, I am extremely concerned about some of the implications of the report of Sheffield health authority on the future strategy for services for elderly people in our area. In the report it is argued:

"There are no clinical reasons . . . why an individual in a chronic, stable condition should be cared for in an NHS setting rather than in a nursing home outside the NHS, or"—

and this is fine—

"in his or her home".

The authority tries to draw a distinction between elderly people with dementia and elderly people who simply require nursing. It is quite impossible and entirely inappropriate to draw such a distinction.

The authority goes on to argue that the NHS should therefore work towards supporting provision in the independent sector and should seek to withdraw its own capacity to provide long-term care for such individuals. It then argues, entirely illogically, that that is especially important because there is an increasing need for elderly people to receive such long-term care, that the cost is too high for the NHS to bear and that there must therefore be faster work to transfer the duty from the NHS to the independent sector.

It is my view, and the view of Sheffield community health council, that the important thing is need and not the resources of the health service in any particular areas and that, until it is absolutely clear that there is adequate provision in some other context for elderly people in need of long-term nursing care, no more beds in the health service in the Sheffield area should be withdrawn.

The debate is an opportunity for the Minister to make it clear to health authorities that they have a duty to provide a service for chronically sick or disabled people in need of day and night nursing, whether it is provided in their own homes through community nursing services, by a combination of home, day or short-stay residential care, or in long-term accommodation. The Government will accept that the most appropriate residential care is delivered in community-based nursing homes with easy access to family, friends and local general practitioner services. We have heard about the appalling example of the transfer to Skipton, where people were moved a long distance from where they were content and felt comfortable.

Patients in the model nursing home in my constituency kept saying, "This is our home." They meant that they were familiar with the rooms, the staff, the locality where they had lived all their lives and the costing system. It was helpful when the Minister said a few weeks ago that it was Government policy that no NHS patient should be transferred into private or independent care without his or her consent. That is an important principle, but we need to go further and recognise the significant difference between long-stay patients in the NHS and residents in nursing homes for the elderly, run by private or charitable institutions. In the first instance, payment has been duly made during a lifetime of work. In the second, payments must be requested from the social security system after full disclosure of the household's income and means. If top-up moneys are required, the family pays a second time for a service that it has already financed.

Will the Minister make it crystal clear to health authorities throughout the country that whenever a transfer is proposed, whether patients are to be physically transferred to another place or not, it amounts to a substantial change for the patient and his or her family. It must therefore be the subject of full consultation with the patient and his family, as well as the community health council in the case of an institution such as the one in Sheffield. It needs to be made clear that the financial change is so substantial that it must be subject to the full consultation procedure.

I make these points not only on behalf of my constituents and my relatives, with whom I have a personal and close relationship, but for ourselves, too. We are paying into the NHS, week in, week out, and so are our families. Where do we want to receive nursing care when we reach an age at which we may require it?

**Mr. Kevin Hughes** (Doncaster, North): It makes a change to take part in a debate in which there are few differences between the Conservative party and the Opposition. However, that has its drawbacks, as it tends to attract little, if any, media attention. The issues, which we have already debated in Committee and on Second reading, are important to those they affect. It is unfortunate that, as there is little difference and not much political fighting between the parties, there will be little media coverage.

Amendment No. 1 seeks to ensure that a person in residential care such as the Bill provides is given a care plan. In the context of community care, the provision's central plank is high-quality care for vulnerable adults who require it. While much emphasis is placed on the care needs of those living in their own homes, there is a danger that the needs of those in residential care will take a back seat, so enabling such residential establishments to be seen as a place of last resort. That is unacceptable.

4.30 pm

As I said in Committee, residential care should be a positive choice made by the resident, the carer and, ideally, the care manager who helps to put together the care package. There should be plenty of time for people to shop around and see which care home is appropriate for their needs. They should have time to look at the inspection reports of various homes and make a positive choice of which one they prefer to live in. If that is done properly, care plans—emphasising the needs and views of the person involved—can be made. The informed choices and expectations of the individual should be followed wherever possible.

Care plans should recognise the rights of individuals to achieve the highest possible quality of life and, where appropriate, to receive a range of therapeutic and remedial services to maximise and maintan levels of independence. They should be able to exercise choice about how they live and ensure their dignity and self-respect, including their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Research has shown that most older people do not wish to live in residential care. It is widely acknowledged that, given a choice, they would prefer to live in their own homes. The importance of residential care as a stepping stone back into the community has been neglected. A good care plan would seek to achieve that preferred option for the individual where appropriate. That would apply particularly to many of those who live in the smaller residential homes to which the Bill relates.

However, there is no incentive for private residential homes, particularly smaller ones, to have a care plan that envisages using those homes as a stepping stone back into the community. I do not want to repeat the arguments adequately made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) in Committee. Due to the funding that private residential homes receive, there is no incentive for them to work towards getting people back into their own homes and into the community.

National health service hospitals and trusts should not be allowed to divest themselves of their responsibility to provide continuing care where appropriate. It is unacceptable to place pressure on vulnerable adults and their carers to accept a standard of care that is inappropriate for them. If it is to have real meaning, the concept of choice and seamless care requires recognising an individual's needs as paramount.

**Mr. David Lidington** (Aylesbury): I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the need for close co-operation between NHS trusts and county or borough social service departments, which is exactly what is happening in my own authority, Buckinghamshire. Will the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends give the House an assurance that they will do all in their power to encourage and persuade Labour-controlled local authorities to consult those in NHS trusts about how they can work together to provide the highest quality of care?

**Mr. Hughes:** I am grateful for that intervention, because it gives me the chance to tell the hon. Gentleman that I spent five years chairing the social services committee of Doncaster metropolitan borough council. The consultation process that took place in Doncaster, a Labour-controlled authority, included as many bodies as possible—the area health authority and voluntary and private sector organisations. Some Conservative Members get carried away by their own propaganda and forget the facts of real life.

I had a meeting with the management of the Doncaster Royal Infirmary and Montagu trusts a week ago at which I asked board members why they never sent delegates to the joint committee meetings. I was none too happy with their answer.

All the services in Doncaster have opted out, which is unfortunate because it will now be even more difficult to put together seamless services for vulnerable and elderly people. So many organisations have to be consulted: social services departments, district health authorities, the Doncaster Royal Infirmary trust, the priority and community care trusts, South Yorkshire ambulance service, GPs and GPs who have become fund holders. The list is becoming endless.

I think that we all agree that under this legislation we are trying to do away with many of these problems. The customer should enjoy a seamless service and not suffer from the unfortunate arguments that can take place between the organisations that I have mentioned.

The establishment of the trusts in Doncaster—the DRI and the priority and community care trusts—with their emphasising cost-effectiveness and increased bed throughput, has led to considerable anxiety among many professionals that too many rushed and unplanned discharges are taking place. Some of these discharges are into residential care, with no discussions, no choice and no care plans. If matters are not to deteriorate further, the production of an individual care plan and the provision of the time in which to ensure that it is effectively implemented are essential.

A care plan is not carved in tablets of stone. It needs to be subjected to regular review and, if necessary, renegotiated. The process must involve those concerned and especially the residents. Systems of review must ensure their full participation and must be structured accordingly. It is essential to recognise that many residents will need a formal or an informal advocate to assist in the process. Such involvement should be covered by the legislation, to ensure that residents can exercise their rights and not have their future left to the sole discretion of the professional workers. We must put a stop to the agist attitude that seems to prevail in our culture which presumes that professionals and others can make decisions for people without seeking their opinion or consent.

**Mr. Hugh Bayley** (York): I had not planned to speak on this amendment, but I want to respond to one or two of the comments of the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—I see that he is smiling, so I must have got his constituency right. It is a peculiar tradition that we do not use people's names in the same way as anyone else would.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments on the fears that have been expressed about a move away from a mixed economy of public and private sector care to a reliance on private-sector accommodation. That implies a lack of choice between the types of regime offered by the public and private sectors.

About two years ago I conducted a study into care for the elderly which involved interviewing 1,300 elderly people in nursing and residential homes, sheltered housing and health service long-stay accommodation. We asked people in public sector homes whether they had considered entering a private sector home and we found that fewer than one in 20 had even considered such a home. We put the same question to people in private sector homes and found that they were even more determined about the rightness of their choice. Fewer than one in 30 had considered moving into public sector homes.

I fear that the choice will be reduced if the number of public sector places continues to be reduced. North Yorkshire county council is considering divesting itself of 20 of its part III homes to a private or voluntary sector body. That will change the nature, pattern and mix of the accommodation that is available in the county.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Developments similar to that which the hon. Gentleman describes in his county are taking place in many counties, not least in Cheshire where the county council has contracted out the running and management of its part III residential homes to a non-profit making charitable organisation but has retained ownership of the capital assets. Has that happened in North Yorkshire? Labour controls Cheshire county council with Liberal Democrat support and has engaged in contracting out in order to avoid being capped. It has transferred the cost of provision to the Department of Social Security until 1 April 1993. Has North Yorkshire county council disposed of all its capital assets as well as its revenue costs?

**Mr. Bayley:** That is a perceptive comment. North Yorkshire county council has commissioned a firm of consultants to carry out a study and is examining the option that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) describes. However, for whatever reason, Cheshire has for some time had the benefit of being able to transfer the cost of part III accommodation from the poll tax payers' budget to the Department of Social Security budget. Even if North Yorkshire county council moves with lightning speed—an uncharacteristic speed for that council—transferring the budget would benefit it for only a month or two.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the Government have taken steps to stop local authorities taking action of the kind that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) describes? The Minister may correct me, but I understand that the Department of Social Security has prevented claims for income support for people placed in local authority trust homes. It has blocked the loophole that allowed the sort of policy development that took place in Cheshire.

4.45 pm

**Mr. Bayley:** I think that my hon. Friend is right and therefore I should withdraw the comment about a month or two of benefit for North Yorkshire county council if it gets its skates on.

It is not just a matter of playing with figures in the budget but of the type and quality of care that an authority is able to provide. One of the sets of data collected in the study to which I referred was a standard form of dependency assessment for residents. We were able to compare dependency over time because of an earlier survey carried out in the authority area in which we were working. We discovered that although the overall dependency of public and private sector residents was similar, the physical dependency of those in private sector homes tended to be greater. However, what might be called the mental state dependency of people in public sector homes was greater and getting greater than that of people in private sector homes.

The private homes were good at dealing with the physically frail but mentally alert, while the public sector homes were left to deal with a growing proportion of the mentally frail and confused. That meant that the nature of the regime in the public sector homes in Lincolnshire, the county in which we undertook our study, was changing. The quality of life was deteriorating in public sector homes because people who are mentally alert prefer to be surrounded by others who are mentally alert, albeit physically frail, than by people who are confused and who may exhibit unnerving behaviour.

If the North Yorkshire plan goes ahead, the council will divest itself of more than half its homes, and that will speed up the process of concentrating the confused elderly in public sector homes.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield expressed surprise that relatives of those elderly people from east London who were placed in a home in Skipton had not complained that they found it difficult to visit. Many people in long-stay residential and nursing care receive no visitors at all. Our study showed that one in 10 residents were never visited. They are on their own. We also found that one in three received fewer than one visit a month. Many people will be lost unless local authorities take action to befriend them.

Some of the people whom I interviewed said, "There is no way out." They were in places such as old rectories and probably 3 miles from a main road and 15 miles from a town. They said, "I have no one to turn to and if I have a complaint I have no means of redress." Later amendments address that extremely worrying issue.

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): I should like to address the need for a care plan based on what we should have learnt from our past mistakes and from the wholesale institutionalisation of a generation of elderly people. That happened because the Government were ideologically committed to closing parts of the national health service and to waging war on local government authorities because most local authorities were Labour controlled. Over the past 13 years, some destructive policies have resulted from the Government's rather bigoted and narrow-minded approach to community care.

I shall concentrate on an excellent document produced by the Royal College of Nursing. It is called "A Scandal Waiting to Happen—Elderly People in Nursing Care in

Residential and Nursing Homes". I commend it to every hon. Member as a well thought out document showing not only what has happened in the past but what we can expect to happen in the future if the Government are not truly committed to community care.

Over the past decade, there has been wholesale privatisation of care for the elderly. To all those who shout, "You can trust the Government", I say that, when I took part in a series of "World in Action" programmes in 1985, I was more or less marginalised by health managers and Conservative politicians, who said that I was telling scare stories and making things up about the care of the elderly in the NHS. I have been completely vindicated. The Government closed NHS beds and starved local authorities of precious resources. The elderly had to vacate long-stay beds, and were left with no choice but to enter private nursing homes.

We all know of the huge amounts of income support paid by the Treasury to prop up the private sector. That is meant as a wholesale criticism not of the private sector but of the Government's privatisation of the elderly.

The Royal College of Nursing is concerned at the amount of money allocated to local authorities to implement the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. They argue, as we have done many times, that those resources should be ring-fenced, and there remains a desperate need for that to be done. Care plans are also needed if past mistakes are not to be repeated. The RCN's report highlights many reasons why that is important

One of the 1990 Act's pruposes was to shift the emphasis away from institutional care to care in the community. The RCN's report points out that there are inadequate resources to allow people to remain in the community. Their institutionalisation flies in the face of the cross-party consensus on keeping the elderly in their own homes. Because local authorities were given insufficient funds, care packages that would have provided home helps and intensive care—by ensuring that nurses were available to put people to bed and to nurse them early in the morning—were not made available to district or community nurses.

The royal college's report highlights that many elderly people were institutionalised when there was no need. Its report quotes a community nurse manager saying that the elderly were admitted to residential homes because community care could not be provided. That is a real tragedy. That manager stated:

"Too great a demand is placed on the district nursing service, and they are operating with unsatisfactory accommodation and with insufficient resources, placing an ever-increasing strain on neighbourhood budgets."

We know that the elderly are being shifted into residential care at great personal cost, and at a high financial cost to the Treasury and the taxpayer.

The absence of any care plan also means that some of the elderly are given inappropriate assessments of their nursing needs and accommodation. A plan would take such factors into account. I repeat that I criticise not the homes themselves but the system that has developed. The RCN report adds:

"Others were readmitted to residential homes from hospital because of pressure on health service beds."

We know that many of the elderly are not given a choice, and that many NHS forms list only private homes.

There is no plan either to meet the changing health and social needs of those in residential homes. Like the rest of us, their lives do not stand still, and a medical condition will often develop further. Residential homes often do not have staff who are sufficiently trained to identify the progression of the many illnesses and disabilities to which the elderly are prone.

The RCN's excellent report highlights many of the problems created by the Government's disastrous policies over the last 13 years. If the Government fail to grasp the nettle and to do something, even at this late stage, there will be depressing consequences. I do not trust the Government when it comes to community care. There is no evidence that we will get from them anything but nice words, glossy pamphlets, and lots of press releases. I do not know about other right hon. and hon. Members, but I am sick of receiving copies of Department of Health press releases that mean nothing.

The Royal College of Nursing's report concludes that, as the elderly population increases, there is mounting unease that their health and social needs will not be met. Nor are the financial difficulties encountered by the elderly when they move into private homes being dealt with by the Government, who are abandoning their responsibilities. The gap between the cost of public and private care is growing wider, and someone has to pick up the bill. It should be the Government, and it is time they took their responsibilities more seriously.

The Government's own guidelines in health circular HC 895 are being ignored. The elderly are being offered no choice. Nothing is on offer to those who choose to remain at home. It is no secret that many concerns have been expressed about the standards of care in some residential and nursing homes—notably in a "Panorama" report in January. The Government have yet to make a convincing response to some of the criticisms highlighted in that programme. I am pleased that the Royal College of Nursing's report chose to mention it. Sadly, I expect that there will be grounds for similar criticisms in future.

I want the growing number of elderly people in nursing or residential homes matched by an increase in nursing resources, so that we can correct the scandalously inadequate treatment, because staff are not properly trained, of elderly people suffering from illnesses associated with old age. Unless the Royal College of Nursing's recommendations are acted upon, the elderly will continue to suffer—until a major scandal forces the Government to take action.

**Ms. Tessa Jowell** (Dulwich): This is almost a technical amendment—a statement of good practice. It has been tabled because common-sense arrangements are frequently not observed. One of the difficulties of developing high-quality community care and of creating around the elderly or disabled person a set of arrangements that maximise the quality of that individual's life is that their effectiveness is only as strong as the weakest link in the chain.

Someone must take responsibility for specifying who will implement the various elements of a care plan. Someone must also be named as the person responsible for implementing the plan. Arguably, that is the job of the care manager, who should be independent and speak, in a partisan way, on behalf of an elderly or disabled person. He or she should safeguard the interests of such a person, and ensure that the needs identified in the assessment are met with practical care and support.

5 pm

There is a good deal of evidence that people have been placed in residential care and nursing homes a long way from their own homes. As other hon. Members have pointed out, that results in their not being visited and leading isolated lives. Such people may derive no more benefit from the new policy than they derived from the old one.

Earlier this week, a constituent rang me in tears, having just been discharged from hospital. She had not been placed in residential care; she had gone home. No plans seemed to have been made for her support, and she telephoned me in desperation. When I visited her, she was writing to her only relative, a daughter living in Cheshire. Cheshire is a long way from Dulwich, and my constituent —desperately frail and ill—was left with no means of support. That is one of many such instances, which show that nothing can be left to chance. We cannot simply hope that, because there has been so much talk suggesting that this is the best way of managing people's care, it will prove to be so.

A care plan creates a specific set of guarantees for elderly people and their relatives, who will then know what to expect. We know that there will be a discrepancy between the assessment of people's needs—led by the local authorities—and the resources that are likely to be available. Broadly speaking, people accept the inevitability of that, but they need to know what they can rely on. An elderly person once said to me, "One promise is better than 30 maybes." We need to remember that; it is an important mechanism for the achievement of the commitment to more user-centred community care that I know is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The establishment of a specified care plan is also an important way of turning the needs and experiences of hundreds of thousands of elderly and disabled people into the big decisions that bring about changes in the nature of services. The information should be fed into the community care plan, which can then be used constantly to audit the quality and range of provision. The amendment proposes good practice. It commends user-centred community care, and it will be welcomed by elderly and disabled people all over the country.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo):** The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) appeared still to doubt the Government's determination to proceed with the implementation of stage 3 of our "Care in the Community" policies. Let me make what I hope is an unequivocal statement, which has already been made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Minister of State or me each time one of us has spoken from the Dispatch Box since the general election. Stage 3 of the implementation of "Care in the Community" will go ahead in April 1993. It is on target, and there has been no change in either the policy or the timetable. The local authorities will assume their enhanced responsibilities at the time of implementation —responsibilities that will include assessing individual needs and arranging for them to be met.

**Mr. Bayley:** When will the Government tell local authorities what additional resources they will receive? The new regime will begin in exactly nine months, but it is almost impossible for authorities to plan if they do not know what resources they will have.

**Mr. Yeo:** Local authorities can be assured that the funding of the policy will be fair. The details will be available to them in the autumn.

We believe that one of the consequences of giving local authorities an enabling role will be the introduction of a larger element of market forces in the provision of community care. I am sorry that that has caused the hon. Member for Wakefield so much dismay. I am confident that it will drive standards up, and ensure that we receive the best possible value for money. The Government want all local authorities to make the fullest possible use of the independent sector.

**Mrs. Mahon:** Has not the Minister learnt any lessons from the Royal College of Nursing report, which states that the independent sector is not equipped to deal with some of the health problems of elderly people?

**Mr. Yeo:** There is abundant evidence that the arrangements that we have put in hand for the inspection of nursing and residential care homes run by independent sector organisations are adequate to ensure that standards are maintained at a high level.

I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) in the Chamber, and I am grateful for his contribution. He is well known in the House for his expertise in this regard. He and I served together for a number of years on what used to be the Select Committee on Social Services; I did not serve for quite as long as he did, but I recall his robust and independent contributions with much pleasure. His style has not changed at all since those days.

My hon. Friend raised a serious point about possible changes in the national health service. He need not fear that the NHS is losing interest in provision and becoming interested only in treatment. It remains the duty of all health authorities to arrange to meet the health needs of the population in the districts that they represent. As health needs and social needs are so closely related—in some cases, they are intertwined—we have required local authorities to consult health authorities when drawing up their community care plans, under the terms of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. We have also required them to consult the voluntary organisations, and the same applies to users and carers.

The hon. Member for Wakefield mentioned NHS trusts. It is highly desirable for trusts, as well as other bodies, to become involved in local community care planning if they are involved in the provision of community care services. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) was rather smoked out by an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), which finally exposed his underlying hostility to NHS trusts.

The hon. Member for Wakefield mentioned a cut in the number of NHS beds. It is true that the number of geriatric beds in the NHS has fallen, but the hon. Gentleman did not mention the enormous increase in the number of nursing home beds, which has risen from 28,000 to 119,000. There has been a similar increase in provision in private residential homes, and a substantial proportion of the occupants of those beds are funded by income support payments—a quarter of a million people, compared with 10,000 13 years ago.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** Does the Minister not accept that that is precisely the example of privatisation of the national

health service that the Opposition gave during the general election campaign? It is happening in my area and in every other area. Individuals previously received a free service from the national health service; now they have to pay for it. Many people in my area do not have a penny to spare after all their income support and pocket money has been spent on their care fees. Is that acceptable to the Minister?

**Mr. Yeo:** When people are funded by income support payments, that is not privatisation. The hon. Gentleman knows that the cost to the Department of Social Security has risen from £10 million to getting on for £2 billion today. If people's fees are paid from income support, that is not privatisation. It is not a definition of privatisation that any of my hon. Friends could even begin to understand.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** Does the Minister agree that privatisation is about the operation of a service? It is not about how the client of the service gets the money. The question, as I understand it, is whether a privatised industry is run for profit. The private nursing homes that we are talking about are, in that sense, privatised institutions.

**Mr. Yeo:** I shall not be inclined to give way again if there are to be somewhat arcane debates about what the word "privatisation" means, but according to my book —and, I believe, according to all my hon. Friends—as long as the Government accept responsibility for assessing needs and for funding the provision of those needs, that is not privatisation. Indeed, I positively welcome the fact that we now have a much greater variety of providers many of whom are in the private sector. Some come from voluntary organisations; others remain in the statutory sector. That is a wholly welcome development.

**Mr. John Gunnell** (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Yeo:** No, I must make some progress. I have already given way a great deal.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) raised an important point about the shortfall between income support levels and the cost of residential care. We expect that, after April next year, local authorities will be able to negotiate very good terms in order to keep the costs of residential care down. We have acknowledged, however, that there is a gap between income support levels and the actual cost in some areas of residential and nursing home care. We shall take that gap into account when we make decisions about funding.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Will my hon. Friend deal with the point that I raised during my contribution to the debate on the amendment: that people are being discharged from national health service hospitals into accommodation in the independent private or charitable sector and that, as the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) pointed out, there is a gap between what people will get from the Department of Social Security through income support and the fees that they or their families may be responsible for paying? Is it not wrong that they should be discharged from, perhaps, a geriatric ward, where all the costs are met through the taxation system, and put into a system whereby they as individuals, or their families, have to pick up an additional bill for their accommodation?

5.15 pm

**Mr. Yeo:** The policy is that nobody should be discharged into a private sector establishment against his or her will, unless the full costs are to be met from public funds. If a contribution is required, the agreement of the individual will be needed.

**Mr. Winterton:** Does that apply only at the time of the person's discharge, or does it also apply if the cost of the accommodation goes up?

**Mr. Yeo:** It is difficult to envisage being able to define at the moment of discharge every conceivable possibility that might arise in the years ahead, but in general I do not think that we shall have a significant number of cases where the rate at which costs go up exceeds the rate at which public funds are available to meet those costs. From April next year, anyone discharged in that way for whom the local authority accepts responsibility will find that the local authority has to negotiate, year on year, the cost of maintaining that provision.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) referred to the role of the health authorities. Their role is to secure provision where there are continuing medical needs. As the hon. Lady acknowledged, that does not have to be in a hospital. It could be in a nursing home. Nevertheless, where medical needs continue, the health authority has a continuing responsibility.

**Ms. Ann Coffey** (Stockport): If I may return to the point made by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), does the Minister agree that, contrary to what he said about being unable to envisage the cost of private care rising to the point at which it cannot be publicly funded, that is exactly and precisely what has happened over the past few years? Public funds that have been made available through Department of Social Security grants have been insufficient to meet the actual cost of care. The resulting gap has caused enormous difficulties for a great number of people. Does the Minister not accept and envisage that that might continue to happen, even though the funding is being transferred from the Department of Social Security to the local authority?

**Mr. Yeo:** From April next year, if discharge is to an independent sector establishment and the local authority accepts responsibility for funding, it will be for the local authority to provide the resources to cover any increase in charges. I hope that the local authorities will use their strong position as negotiators in contracting with the private sector to ensure that any increases are kept to a minimum.

**Mr. Gunnell:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Yeo:** No, I really must make some progress. I have already been speaking for 13 minutes.

If I may comment specifically on the amendment—I sympathise with the principle behind it—I believe that it is unnecessary in the context of the Bill. When the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is fully implemented, local authorities will have this responsibility for assessing individual needs, for designing care arrangements and for securing them within the available resources. That will include all individuals requiring public support who are discharged from hospital into private and voluntary residential or nursing home care. Our intention is to ensure that all individuals, whether in hospital or

*[Mr. Yeo]*

referred from the community, receive a proper assessment of their needs and that an individual plan is put together for the care that should be provided.

**Mr. Roger Sims** (Chislehurst): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the London borough of Bromley, assessments along the lines of the guidance issued by his Department are already being carried out and that they are not considered complete until the assessment itself and the care package proposals have been completed and agreed by the client? Does my hon. Friend not think that that is good practice which could be adopted generally?

**Mr. Yeo:** I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that it is good practice and it is certainly our intention that where an assessment has been made the results of that assessment should be shared with the client. I am glad to hear of the practice already adopted by my hon. Friend's authority.

Work is in hand to develop arrangements for the introduction of needs-based assessment. It is a key task for local authorities. It is one on which they should co-operate closely with health authorities and other agencies. We have made it clear that authorities should make effective arrangements to inform the public about the details of any new arrangements for assessment and care provision. Effective arrangements for community care require robust agreed procedures for discharging patients from hospital —either, where possible, back into their own homes with the right package of support and care or, if appropriate, into nursing home or residential care. We have issued guidance to health and local authorities about discharge. Discharge arrangements are also covered by the patients charter. We have encouraged health authorities to undertake a sample quality audit of their discharge arrangements to get a better understanding of how these policies work in practice.

The new arrangements for assessment and the provision of care that are being introduced next April will address the concerns behind the amendment. Social services authorities will assess the needs of individuals who are about to leave hospital and who are in need of residential or nursing home care and will plan a package of care accordingly. Contracts with providers will reflect those care plans and specify the service which they are to provide to the resident. These arrangments, including individual assessment of need and the agreement of a care plan, will cover those patients discharged from hospital into nursing home and residential care who require public support. Most local authorities and health authorities are working hard now to ensure that those new arrangements are introduced smoothly and that across the board they work closely to ensure a seamless provision of care. For all those reasons, I believe that this well-meaning but unnecessary amendment should be rejected by the House.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The debate shows the importance that the Labour party attaches to care in the community. That is why we have given the Bill a speedy passage through the House, but taken the opportunity, as we do again now, to voice concern about the danger of failing to get community care right. It was an instructive Committee stage and I appreciated the opportunity, with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and others, to probe the Government on a series of points. It is notable that many new Members played a significant part in Committee, and it is clear today that we have a remarkable number of hon. Members in the Chamber, considering the hour and the nature of the debate.

In moving the amendment, my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has brought us to the heart of concern over the implementation of community care; a principle that is supported on both sides, but which is meaningless unless we will the means, the resources and the methods.

The amendment looks at method at the difficult interface between health provision and care provision and suggests that no arrangements should be made for a person being transferred into accommodation from an NHS hospital or trust.

"unless the voluntary organisation or other person concerned has ensured that that person is provided with a care plan and the authority is satisfied that such arrangements will facilitate this plan."

The amendment seeks to place those clear obligations on the organisations concerned in decision making. Advocacy is involved in the next amendment, but in this debate we are stressing the need for personal consideration and real care for the individual.

The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) responded to the amendment by demonstrating the breadth of concern on this issue. He made a thoughtful contribution and it is sad that, apart from the Minister, his was the only speech from the Conservative benches, unless one counts the intervention from the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), which I can describe only as a petty party political sound bite. He has clearly spent too long working for Conservative Members and I hope that in time he will learn to listen to Opposition Members who have knowledge and experience. In fairness, that is the spirit in which the Minister approached the Committee stage and appears to be approaching today's debate, although I disagree with some of the points he made in his response.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), who has direct experience of residential care, made it clear that we are dealing with the way in which individuals see their placement—as the place in which they live, their home. She was right to do so and to say that the patient and the family should be involved. It is easy to say that, but it is difficult to achieve and even more difficult to guarantee. She is right to stress that as a reason for the amendment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) made a valuable contribution to the Committee, and emphasised the need for choices to be positive choices, not just to be imposed on the individual as a matter of convenience, without attention to the long-term care and needs of that individual.

When he responded to the debate, the Minister confirmed the Government's determination, as he put it, to implement the rest of the community care provisions in April 1993. We still wonder whether he and his colleagues will do it properly. Will the cash be there? My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) asked about that, and the Minister answered with as near to a straight face as he could manage. If, as he suggests, the resources and cash are to be there, why is the Secretary of State for Health finding it so difficult to achieve ring fencing?

Some of my hon. Friends who have been dealing with this Bill were also members of the Committee dealing with

the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. From the outset, we told the Government, "If you are going to do this properly and if you are serious in pursuing the idea of care in the community, you must ensure that the resources are provided and seen to be provided." We still wait for a positive response to that. It seems that the Secretary of State for Health has been convinced of the case we made in Committee. I do not know whether she was convinced by the golden tongues of Labour Members or by experience since becoming Secretary of State. The important thing is that she appears to understand the point we were making at that time, which is still the kernel of our concern.

I regret that the Minister characterised the comments of one of my hon. Friends as antagonism to trusts. Throughout the consideration of trusts, we have said that we do not believe that they will work to the benefit of the community and the individual. We are making predictions about what will happen as a result of the pressures on those running trusts, however well meaning they may be. At the time of the privatisation of water, we predicted precisely the behaviour of plcs, and we have seen our words justified. If one is to introduce trusts, one must put in place the systems to protect the individual in the market that is being created.

The Minister also said that it was not the Government's intention to see discharges into residential care at a cost greater than that available for public funds. As has been said by several of my hon. Friends, that is not what happens in practice. Often, families with a loved one in care or being cared for in one of a number of circumstances, are under great pressure and find themselves filling a gap to avoid that relative being moved and unsettled. It is not just a question of convenience of placement to fit the finance available: we are talking about the loss of someone's home.

There is also the issue of the loss of disposable assets. That is a matter for this Minister and for the Department of Social Security. It is not good enough to leave it to the local authority to tighten the screw on providers, which is effectively what the Minister is saying. A theory that the Government have applied in a variety of circumstances is that, if one places a cap on the money, magic will create greater efficiency, and an improved quality of service will be provided for less money. Good practice needs resources. We all applaud the search for efficiency, but too much capping will distort the quality of service provided. In his response, the Minister described the Government's intention to cap the funds available for care in the community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) referred to the effects of policies that may look fine on paper but which fail to provide individual care. She referred to the worrying report that has been produced by the Royal College of Nursing. Another example is day surgery. That is promoted on the grounds of efficiency, but it is risky if community support and care are not adequate.

My hon. Friend the Member for York made a clear distinction between the needs of different clients or patients and the importance of the environment in which individuals find themselves. He was right to underline the position of those who are never visited. He said that they are on their own. At certain times during this debate, and, I suspect, in later debates, the Minister will start to understand how they feel. Those individuals are on their own, and they need the protection of proper procedures to ensure that they are not abandoned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) rightly said that all that we are talking about in this amendment, and in many others with which we shall deal, is good practice and arrangements that maximise the quality of life. That is what the Opposition are pursuing in our amendments. The importance of this amendment is that key decisions are made at the point of discharge. If the arrangements are not made properly or if issues are overlooked, the arrangements can become dangerous and potentially disastrous for the individual. As has often been said, care in the community is in danger of becoming neglect in the community or neglect in a home unless these matters are addressed properly in procedures that must be taken into account of and followed at the time of discharge.

5.30 pm

There has been great concern about the closure of certain health service institutions, such as the William Nichol home in my constituency, because people are being moved from NHS institutions which have been their homes, often for many years. We should not treat lightly the arrangements made for those individuals at the time of discharge.

The pressure for arrangements for discharge to be made long before the date at which it has to happen and to be tailored to the individual has been accepted by the health authority and the Welsh Office after a lot of debate. We want such good practice and such important considerations to be written into the legislation and into the regulations that have to be observed. It is a personal matter; we are dealing with individuals.

There have been occasions when hospitals have discharged patients, especially the elderly, into circumstances in which they were without the care and support they needed and the pressure of cash limits is always there. The hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), who also intervened with a sound bite, may not share our view but this is now generally accepted as being bad practice. In recent years, efforts have been made to ensure that discharge is properly planned but the change to trusts, and indeed a financially driven regime for directly managed units too, will increase the risks of hasty discharge or discharge into inappropriate circumstances. We must take great care.

I hope that the Minister will take on board the spirit of the amendment. We have made it clear that it is not the Labour party's intention to delay this limited and sensible Bill. We seek to persuade the Minister and his colleagues of the importance of the Government acting on their own and in their own right to respond to our concern, to recognise the strength of our case today and to ensure that proper procedures are put in place to protect the individuals concerned.

We believe that history will show the need for the arrangements proposed in the amendment, but because we do not want to delay the House or the Bill, I invite my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield, who moved it so ably, to withdraw the amendment.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

'(1B) Arrangements shall only be made by virtue of this section where the voluntary organisation or other person providing the accommodation operates clear procedures providing opportunities for residents to review their own situation regularly with a friend or adviser and the care managers.'.

The amendment deals with opportunities for elderly people to review their situation with a friend or adviser and the care manager. We are debating community care yet again. I am pleased by the opportunities to do so in this Parliament, in contrast to the previous Parliament. One reason for the change was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) when she referred to a constituent who came to see her. She underlined what some of us said on Second Reading, which is that, although the House may be packed for debates on Maastricht, people come to our surgeries on community care issues far more than they do on the bigger issues. That will be reflected as our debates on these matters continue.

The reason for tabling the amendment is that community care cannot be complete unless an essential ingredient is the recognition that the individuals whom we seek to serve in our communities and in residential homes have rights and views, and a desire to have an environment that is acceptable to them. We believe that the case for advocacy, which we debated in Committee, is overwhelming. Although the amendment does not go as far as we wish, it would give the opportunity, when vital decisions are being taken about community care, for the involvement of a friend or adviser, or for the presence of someone acting for and with the person. The person's needs are absolutely paramount when care managers make recommendations and take crucial decisions about the lifestyle of the individual.

As we debate community care, we recognise the growth of private residential homes, with which the Bill deals. One Scottish Tory newspaper refers irreverently to "granny farms". That term could apply if we denied the residents of such homes the rights that an advocate would insist that we recognise.

Demographic changes mean that there are more elderly people, so a strategy for care in the community must recognise that there will be some people in residential care. However, we strongly assert that support should be given within the community to ensure genuine independence for elderly people. We believe that the existence of advocacy would be a step in that direction. The Bill concerns the rights of many elderly people who may, at their age, become a little confused. If people are confused, the need to have a friend, an adviser or an advocate when decisions are being taken about individuals becomes all the greater.

Some of us received a report yesterday published by the Consumers Association. It was headed:

"Contracting for residential care: individual contracts for older people in residential care and nursing homes."

It dealt with contracts and specifically with confused residents. The House will recognise, as I quote from the report, that some of the points made are consistent with the wording of the amendment although the amendment was tabled before the report was published.

The report says:

"The situation becomes less easy with people who are confused or suffering from dementia. The same principles apply—just because someone is mentally impaired, it does not mean that they do not have preferences which are worth formalising . . . Also, it may be that more active participation would be needed on the part of a spouse, relative, friend or professional advocate drawing up the contract."

That is almost the wording we have chosen to use in the amendment.

The amendment also refers to voluntary organisations, if only because so many voluntary groups are involved in the provision of care and in preparing care plans. It is important for us to acknowledge that the National Council for Voluntary Organisations Community Care Alliance has given support to the general principles in the amendment. In its manifesto prior to the election, the alliance said about user and carer participation:

"Community care envisages the active participation of service users and carers both in individual needs assessments and in the planning of services. Achieving this will involve challenging vested interests and shifting power to service users.

Training and support, in some cases advocacy support, are needed to give service users and carers the confidence to participate."

I suggest that that applies to elderly people, too. Elderly, frail, vulnerable people in residential homes are in a difficult position. The decisions that are taken about them and the services that are or are not provided are of crucial interest to them. In that context, health provision becomes a very personal matter and is pivotal to the lifestyle and the quality of life of elderly people.

The amendment gained considerable support in the BMA's recently published document on this very issue—the tensions between care provision and what is happening in the health service and the health care problems of individuals. At risk of wearying the House, I should like to quote from that BMA report, which the all-party group on disability considered yesterday:

"The provision of residential and nursing care perhaps demonstrates most clearly the need for effective collaboration between health and local authorities, relevant professionals and voluntary organisations. The 'Caring for People' White Paper imposes a delineation between health and social care to explain the funding of the new arrangements. In reality, many dispute that this delineation actually exists. This is especially apparent when related to care for people with chronic, severe ill health, such as the frail elderly. As both health and local authorities will, understandably, be keen to limit expenditure, there is a danger that each will view the patients' needs as being the responsibility of the other authority."

In the absence of the advocacy of a friend or companion who is willing to speak for the patient, and with two authorities tugging away at the provision of health care, what opportunity do frail or vulnerable people have to say anything about their needs and rights?

**Ms. Lynne:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the advocate must be an independent advocate and not tied to a local authority? If the advocate is not independent, there is a danger that he will decide what the individual needs by reference to what the local authority can provide.

**Mr. Clarke:** I entirely agree, and I hope to come to that point in due course.

Let me quote another section of the BMA report, remembering the crucial importance of health care for elderly people:

"The BMA has received several reports from hospital specialists who have been frustrated by the lack of information on the rapid changes taking place in the private home sector. The lack of consideration given to the provision of general medical services when private homes are set up is also of grave concern."

If it is of grave concern to an organisation as professional and as well informed as the BMA, is it not also of considerable concern to elderly people who are placed in such difficult circumstances?

Fundamentally, the amendment advocates good practice, because advocacy is good practice. It would also give value for money. All the reports that we have considered—the Griffiths report, the Wagner report, which I know is of great interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), and, indeed, the White Paper "Caring for People"—suggest that we may not be getting value for money even from the sums that are being made available for the services. If there is any doubt about an individual's needs, rights or desires —perhaps the word "desires" is more important than the others in terms of the individual's rights being paramount —we are not likely to get value for money.

Each of the reports that I have mentioned supports the view that many elderly people are placed inappropriately, either in homes that are not suitable for them or in residential care rather than elsewhere in the community where they could benefit greatly. That is why advocacy is important.

5.45 pm

**Dr. Liam Fox:** I do not doubt the hon. Gentleman's sincerity, but can he give us some examples of who the advocates will be and who will appoint and regulate them so that they look after the interests of patients independently and are not in someone else's pocket?

**Mr. Clarke:** I hope to come to that point in due course. If he feels that, by the end of my short speech, he has not received an adequate reply, the hon. Gentleman would be well advised to read the report of my speech in Committee. He could have intervened or even made a speech on that occasion, and I am sorry that he did not take that opportunity. He may find that speech good reading, none the less.

We hear much about choice in relation to care in the community and care of the elderly, but we know that, in practice, it is, for the most part, mere waffle. How can an elderly person who has had a stroke, whose speech is impaired, who is blind—in some cases, deaf and blind—express his or her choice in the absence of advocacy? The community care provisions in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 were introduced in response to the problems that we are discussing, and if that Act is to be given meaning, it is important that the amendment should be given a proper hearing. How can someone suffering from Alzheimer's be represented adequately when decisions are taken about him? In the absence of the kind of help that the amendment seeks to provide, how can the wishes of their carers be adequately represented when in some cases they are absolutely exhausted?

Hon. Members have mentioned social security—not just individual payments for income support which might give rise to individual problems, but the whole system which the Minister tells us is still to be introduced in April next year; we wait with interest to see whether his words are prophetic—whereby the money will be switched to the local authorities which will be seen as enablers rather than providers. With all those changes taking place, life may become extremely confusing, and not just for professional bodies such as the BMA or for local authorities—my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) gave an excellent response suggesting that local authorities are aware of the problems and genuinely seeking to deal with them on a day-to-day basis.

Even when people are elderly, vulnerable and frail they have rights, such as the right to privacy and the right to make choices about clothing and food. That came to the fore in Committee, and we heard much disturbing evidence about those rights being challenged. People's privacy had been impinged upon and, although I do not say that it happens often, some elderly people have been locked up all night in circumstances that we regard as utterly unacceptable. We are entitled to ask who will protect those vulnerable people. In the absense of advocacy, do we really think that we can conceivably solve problems such as those discussed in Committee, which all of us found distressing.

In Committee, the views of directors of social services were related to us by my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich. If we wantto get to grips with the problem, examine what happens in residential care homes and improve matters—I accept that the challenge is enormous —the views of such directors are important. My hon. Friend quoted one director as saying:

> "It's not the children at risk who keep us awake at night, it's what might be happening to elderly people in residential care in the local authority's own homes and to the thousands of elderly residents who are cared for often a long way from home, in private residential and nursing homes."

When directors tell us that, it is time for us to worry about what is happening to our elderly folk.

How would any of us feel if such things were happening to any of our own parents or people in our families? We would be greatly worried and rightly so. When we have an opportunity such as that offered by the Bill to improve the position and introduce changes, we are right to take it. We must have some strategy for examining the system, the position of individuals and the quality of care. Those responsible for providing that care must know that that strategy exists.

In Committee several of my hon. Friends, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey), expressed anxiety about examples of elderly people being evicted from private residential homes. When an elderly person has no family or anyone to defend him or her, the availability of advocacy becomes important.

In an intervention the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) asked me to define the role of the advocate. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) raised the issue of the independence of the advocate. Those were both fair points, all the more so because we must recognise that there are times when the interest of the elderly individual and the interest of the family conflict. That can often happen. It is right that at the end of the assessment and the decision-making process, the elderly person is given greater priority. Therefore, I accept the case for independence in advocacy.

Of course, advocacy may vary. It does not always have to be on a professional basis. There are some excellent examples of voluntary advocates. For example, I commend the Sheffield advocacy alliance to the hon. Members for Woodspring and for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington). I am sure that they wish to pursue the matter more fully and to see advocacy in practice, and I encourage them to do so.

*[Mr. Clarke]*

We seek to discourage the idea that elderly people merely go into homes to receive services passively. They do not enter a home simply to be "helped". They want to feel that they are individuals who are encouraged to enjoy the best possible quality of life and to participate in their care. It is not always possible for elderly residents to participate if their views, needs and rights cannot be expressed.

I also commend to the hon. Members for Woodspring and for Aylesbury the views of Citizen Advocacy and Age Concern. Those organisations have spent a great deal of time on the matter. They understand that the quality of care provision for elderly people can be improved by making provision for advocacy. Sometimes even close members of the elderly person's family cannot get near to the right solution to particular problems. The very independence of the advocate can be helpful in reaching a solution.

We recognise the dedication of nursing staff, but we must accept that, despite their dedication, they are not always the right persons exclusively to take decisions on behalf of their elderly residents or clients. We dealt with that point in Committee. The independence of the type of advocate that we suggest in amendment No. 2 is extremely important. We accept that philosophy.

I finish by dealing a little more specifically with the definition of the advocate's role. If my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich will forgive me for quoting her again, she did a service to the Bill and the debate about advocacy and representation when she gave the definition of advocacy drawn up by John O'Brien, one of the American pioneers of citizen advocacy. He described it as

"the process whereby one individual represents the interests of another as if they were his or her own."

That is the process which the amendment seeks to make available. The amendment is clear. It is consistent with the commitment to care in the community of my hon. Friends and the voluntary organisations the views of which we embraced in the amendment. As the amendment is both realistic and attainable, I hope that the Minister and the House will respond positively.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** It is a great privilege to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who feels passionately about the issue and has spent much of his time in the House arguing the case for advocacy. I commend his continuing efforts to persuade the Government to take seriously the issue with which he dealt in his speech to amendment No. 2.

I also welcome you to the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the first opportunity that I have had to speak in a debate when you have been in the Chair. Those of us from the west riding of Yorkshire are proud to see you in the Chair. We all wish you well. It is a great privilege to have a Deputy Speaker who understands the important things in life like rugby league football and, of course, community care. I hope that you will see fit to call me on many future occasions.

Amendment No. 2 attempts to include in the legislation the Government's own policy. I simply refer to two documents published by the Government on the requirement to review cases where people are placed in some form of care setting. First, the Minister will be familiar with the document "Home Life". It is the guidance issued by the Government on the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984. In paragraph 2.1.5, entitled "Review of Placement" it states:

"After the trial period the proprietor should discuss fully with the prospective resident and key supporter (relative, friend, social worker) the suitability of the placement and the prospective resident's feelings about it. The possibility of transfer if the placement is unsuitable and eventual discharge, should also be raised if appropriate. Review decisions should be recorded and implemented."

Paragraph 2.1.6, entitled "General Reviews", states:

"On admission a programme of general reviews should be established and the purpose and process of the reviews explained. These reviews will include general health and social needs, and should always be regarded as an opportunity to extend methods of rehabilitation and prepare residents for leaving when this is appropriate. The resident and key supporter should normally be amongst those involved in such reviews."

That is the Government's guidance. That is what they say should happen in our care homes.

The Government went on to commission a report which came out in 1988. The Wagner report was endorsed by the Government. Chapter 3, entitled "Enlarging and Safeguarding Choice", states:

"We wish to ensure that people who begin to need assistance in order to care for themselves are able to exercise a positive choice over the combination of accommodation and personal services which they require."

Paragraph (v) says:

"The chosen service should be reviewed at appropriate intervals."

On page 31, the same report states:

"As and when needs change, either users or carers should be able to call a review. We are particularly concerned with those residents who are unable to exercise effective choice or give effective consent."

That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West.

The report continues:

"where a general practitioner judges this to be the case, we recommend that it be a statutory requirement that a review be held at least every six months."

In practice, reviews are virtually non-existent in care homes. Those reports, which supposedly form the backbone of the present Government's procedures for the management of care—whether in the public or in the private sector—are absolutely meaningless. Although they sound nice and have been endorsed by the Minister, his colleagues and his predecessors, in practice they mean nothing.

6 pm

The reason why the Government are reluctant to give detailed consideration to the introduction of a formal review system is not purely and simply because of their laissez-faire, laid-back and "let market forces run the system" attitude. If they introduced a review system, it would prove that a vast number of placements, especially those in the private sector, are utterly inappropriate, as many Opposition Members have feared. People who do not need to be in private care and nursing homes are placed in them and it is totally wrong. If the Minister were honest, he would admit that he knows that to be the truth. Any hon. Member who has looked into care homes in their constituency, or has talked to people in the private care sector or in social services departments, will accept that that is true in many areas.

The main purpose of reviews is to check on the appropriateness of a placement. I recall a discussion with a gentleman for whom I have a good deal of respect—

Tony Pitacio—who was the chairman of the British Federation of Care Home Proprietors. Prior to that organisation having some internal difficulties, which I shall not go into, I attended a conference which I believe he chaired. The hon. Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) also spoke at the conference, which was held in Yorkshire. We gave different perspectives on our attitudes to private care and the care of the elderly. Mr. Pitacio told me that about one quarter of the people in his care home should not have been there. A substantial number of them would have been supported by finance from the Department of Social Security.

Evidence to the Select Committee on Health, when it considered the wider issues relating to the operation of local authority social services was clear. The evidence was also clear when the Health Select Committee joined the Select Committee on Social Security to consider the financing of private care homes. For example, we heard clear evidence from the Association of Directors of Social Services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West was present in March 1991, when directors and deputy directirs from various London boroughs, controlled by different political parties, gave evidence. The consensus among them was recorded in the minutes of that meeting. They said that 50 per cent. of people in private care homes in London could and should have been living independently or semi-independently in the community.

**Mrs. Angela Browning** (Tiverton): If I have understood the hon. Gentleman correctly, he is saying that many residents in care homes are capable of independently living or living with some protection in the community. In Devon, his party has had the most to say when the social services department has rightly analysed the needs of people in care homes and has proposed the closure of residential homes. At the last Labour party conference, great political capital was made of the proposals by Devon county council social services to close some homes. Yet now, as I understand it, the hon. Gentleman is saying that many authorities should be doing what Devon county council social services have been doing—providing more day care places and more care in the community for residents in care homes, having analysed their needs. Have I understood the hon. Gentleman correctly?

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I have spoken in virtually every community care debate in this place since 1987. As I said on Second Reading and in Committee, the main error of the Government's ways is that they have allowed an open-ended investment of income support in institutional care. Therefore, in many localities, including my own and possibly in the hon. Lady's constituency, although I do not know Devon well, many people end up in care because resources have not been invested in alternatives to institutional care.

My authority in Wakefield had major problems with the standard spending assessment because it could not spend the money that it needed to provide statutory facilities and services for people outside care, because the Government prevented it from doing so by threatening it with rate capping; yet a huge amount of money has been invested in the private care sector.

I know of many people who have gone into care when they did not need to do so. Their relatives have told me that they could not get the services to maintain them independently in the community because the local authority and the health authority did not have the resources to provide them.

Once people enter the private care sector, the money flows in—£288 per week. If that money were available to purchase facilities in the community, those people could have remained independent.

If the change takes place in April next year, assessment will be meaningless unless we positively invest in developing alternatives to care of the sort that the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) described. In some respects, I go along with the trend in Devon, but I suspect that my political colleagues there were telling the hon. Lady and her party that the alternatives to care were not sufficient for the authority to take the action that it was proposing. I undertand her argument, and she may expand it if she wishes to contribute to the debate.

Reviews allow us to check on the appropriateness of placements in whatever sector—whether in what the Government call the independent sector and what I would call the private sector, or in the local authority sector.

It is only right that each person's case should be looked into. Whatever type of home they are in, we should be aware of whether they are being placed appropriately. A review would also afford the opportunity to make an informal, objective check on the well-being of residents. At least every six months, there is a statutory check on whether a child is being properly looked after in the environment in which it has been placed, whether at home on trial, in a foster home, a children's home or a community home. That should also happen with elderly people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West said that a person's medical position may change. I know of people who have entered care homes in an appalling state, but have made a marked improvement within a couple of weeks or months because they have been properly fed and looked after. They have changed fundamentally, put on weight, regained strength and sometimes been capable of returning to independent or semi-independent living in the community.

People's social circumstances may also change. Relatives, friends or carers who could not look after or support a person at the time of admission to a home, may now be able to offer additional support.

My hon. Friend also said that a review would offer a formal opportunity for residents to voice their opinions about what should happen to them. The Minister will recall that we discussed that in Committee, when I said that, for many elderly people, the idea of freedom of choice is nonsense. They are placed by hospitals or relatives in homes and often they do not want to go. I know of many people who have been placed away from their home area. They have had no choice. A review would allow them to have some say in what is happening in their lives and in what is often intimate care, in the establishment in which they have been placed.

A review would also offer an opportunity to consider rehabilitation—an opportunity which is not allowed under the present system. I also said in Committee that there is an assumption that once an elderly person is in care, that is the end of it. That is nonsense. We should work towards rehabilitation for each elderly person, if it is at all possible and if they desire it.

The assumption is that, once an old person is admitted to care, it will be downhill and decline until the end comes.

*[Mr. Hinchliffe]*

That is wrong. We should offer people a positive choice, should they leave care, between perhaps some sheltered accommodation and return to some form of semi-independent living. Such choice is not on the agenda now, and that is why we need a formal review system.

It is worth repeating what was said in Committee about the central weakness of the Government's funding system for private nursing and residential care homes. That system rewards those private home owners who increase a resident's dependency. If one owns a jointly registered care home, one can make more money if one gets more of one's patients to transfer from just residential care to nursing care.

What incentive is there for that owner to get someone back into the community? The private care sector is under pressure at the moment and there are vacancies in many homes, so what incentive is there for the private care home owner to rehabilitate a patient? If he does so, he will lose profits by virtue of the fact that he has one fewer resident. The Government's system of funding works against the idea of rehabilitating the elderly, disabled and handicapped people or persons with learning difficulties or mental illness. Rehabilitation means lost income—such is the inherent nonsense of the private care market.

The Minister believes that our objections to the private care market rest solely on ideology, but I have sound practical concerns that make me argue that that market is the wrong one for the care of the elderly and other similarly vulnerable people. For that reason, the review system is urgently needed.

In the past few months, I have also spoken to two Ministers at the Department of Social Security about the need for a review system to check the appropriate or inappropriate use of public funding through the payment of income support to care home owners. A worrying case that has arisen in the constituency of the hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) illustrates my concern. I shall pass on the details of that case to the Under-Secretary if the hon. Lady is happy about that, but I believe that it is the prime responsibility of the Department of Social Security.

That case involves a woman who was moved from the care section to the nursing section of a jointly registered home without any need and without her consent. That lady is not even receiving any nursing care, but that transfer means that the home is getting more money a week because of the cost differential between the two types of care. Those who own that home may receive more income, but such nursing care is inappropriate for that woman. A review system would introduce a formal check on the appropriate use of public funding in such circumstances. It would also act as a check on the standard of care in any particular establishment.

The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West reflects our practical concerns about the way in which the community care legislation is operating and will operate after 1 April 1993. Let us be honest about this: we are talking about the lives of individuals. The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 is about individual human beings—our constituents.

The case of one of my constituents—I have his family's permission to raise it—illustrates precisely the need for the amendment. I hope the Minister will take careful note of the circumstances of the gentleman's case, which is worrying, but not that unusual. His name is Mr. James Edward Bull, and he is 39. His two sisters, Mrs. Mary Banham and Mrs. Susan Turton, saw me on Monday to express their concern about their brother's circumstances and the way in which his case has been handled under the current community care system.

Jimmy comes from Wakefield. In July 1986, this young man—39 is still young—lost his feet and fractured his skull when he was run over by a train. Unfortunately, he took a short cut across a railway line and was knocked down and seriously injured. In fact, his life was threatened as a result of the injuries he received. Sadly, while he was in hospital, he became ill with meningitis, and he is now severely brain-damaged, he has no sight, no hearing and little speech and he must take food intravenously. In a letter from his sisters, which I received yesterday, they describe him as a cabbage.

That man was transferred from Pinderfields hospital in Wakefield in September 1991 to a private nursing home in Dewsbury. The hospital could not offer continuing care, and it was felt that he should be cared for permanently in a nursing home. That nursing home cared for him for a fortnight and subsequently returned him to Pinderfields. His family were very concerned at the marked deterioration in his general condition and weight in those two weeks.

6.15 pm

The family maintain that Pinderfields hospital exerted great pressure to discharge Jimmy. They maintain that the hospital felt that he did not require hospital care. In the letter that I received, one sister notes:

"I was given a book of private nursing homes and told to get on with it myself, even mentioning the Yellow Pages."

Unfortunately, that is the reality behind the care plans of the NHS. I am not singling out my authority for criticism, such practice is common across the country. All our constituencies are facing similar problems.

Eventually, after various developments in Jimmy's case, he was placed at Stallingborough nursing home at Grimsby, 80 miles from his home town of Wakefield. He has been at that nursing home since last October. I had a meeting with his elderly mother, Mrs. Brett, about the problems caused to her because of his distance from Wakefield. She loved and cared for him very much, but a round trip of 160 miles meant that it was virtually impossible for that elderly lady to see her son regularly.

I saw Mrs. Brett about that problem only recently, but I am sorry to report that she died a couple of weeks ago in hospital. I will not go into the circumstances of her death, but I am pursuing that matter with the health authority. Jimmy's sisters maintain that the fact that he was so far from home broke their mother's heart. I can accept that, given what I know about the case.

I want to make it clear that the sisters are not in any way attacking the private care home. They have spoken highly of the care provided, and say in their letter:

"He is loved and cared for as a person".

However, they add:

"but there is no follow up regarding his quality of life."

Jimmy's case vividly illustrates the problems faced by many in care who have no voice and who cannot stand up for themselves.

In their letter, his sisters list the problems caused by that lack of follow-up:

"His eyes—we have got a TV for him—but can he see it and how much can he see?

Hearing—we know there is a problem with his hearing due to the fracture of his skull at the time of the train accident. But there has been no follow up on whether improvements can be made on his present hearing aid.

Teeth—only roots left which cause recurring infections—needs specialised dental treatment.

Speech—can say a couple of words—therapy may assist.

Muscle therapy—after all this time just laid like a vegetable his muscles must have wasted away—can't they be improved?"

I stress that the sisters are not knocking the home where their brother lives. However, in common with their late mother, they want him to be nearer to his home town. Unfortunately, that is not a practical possibility at the moment, but we are making every effort to do that.

Those sisters want an independent, objective and comprehensive review of their brother's case, which will cover all the various points about which they are concerned. That is precisely why we have tabled the amendment calling for such a review procedure.

The current legislation does not impose on the Wakefield health authority or the Wakefield social services department any requirement to carry out a formal review of the case. Nor is there any requirement in the case of the Grimsby health authority or the Grimsby social services department to monitor this man's circumstances objectively. Yet, as his sisters say, that is urgently needed. We desperately need a system of the type to which the amendment refers. Jimmy Bull does not have a great deal to be thankful for, as must be fairly obvious from my description of his circumstances. However, he does have a family who love him, care for him, stand up for his rights, and are concerned about the fact that nobody is formally assessing his circumstances in the home—medically, socially or in any other way.

Many people in care are without mobility, hearing, sight or speech, and have no one like this man's two sisters to go to a Member of Parliament or kick up a fuss in the press. I hope that the Minister will take account of the circumstances of people like Jimmy Bull and do something about them. As someone who has worked with children, I can say that people like Jimmy have less of a voice than children do. There is a formal review system that gives children some voice and provides some check on the appropriateness of placement.

This amendment is vital if the well-being of people such as Jimmy Bull is to be secured. I therefore hope that we shall have a positive response from the Minister, even if that means his introducing, at a very early stage, legislation to provide the requirement that is envisaged in the amendment.

**Mr. Gunnell:** Following the very moving account of the case of the constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), which illustrates the points that we want to make, it is difficult to return to statistics. It is difficult to take a wider look at the issue and to make the case that the amendment would be extremely helpful to the Government in terms of financing the whole package of community care.

It is clear that there are many more people in residential care than there need be. The Firth committee, which was set up under the aegis of the Department of Health and Social Security, concluded that the increase in residential provision in the first half of the 1980s was not accounted for by the rise in the elderly population. That increase was twice what was suggested demographically. Similarly, William Laing, a research specialist in private health care, concluded in his review of private health care, which was published in 1990-91, that there were 29 per cent. more elderly people in long-term residential care than might have been expected. There are in long-term residential care people for whom it is not the proper type of placement. A system of review and of advocacy, with a view to their possible removal from such care, is crucial to such people.

In this connection, I want to pay tribute to a group that operates in my constituency. I refer to the Belle Isle Winter Aid Group, which is in contact with about 500 elderly people in one of the major estates that I represent. In the last year or two, the group has been part funded by the Leeds social services department and the Leeds health authority. The reason for that is that it has contact with many elderly people in the area.

The social services department and the health authority were both very interested in the group's work. They wanted to ascertain how many of those 500 people wished to go into long-term residential care. I emphasise that this is a voluntary group and that, by and large, the people who did the visiting were volunteers. Their conclusion was that nobody they visited wanted to go into long-term residential care. Some people recognised that they might have to do so in the future, but they all emphasised that if services that would enable them to stay in their own homes were available, that is what they would want to do. This voluntary group does its best to see that services are in place for such people.

The case for advocacy and review in respect of those in residential care is very important indeed. As a social services chairman, I have seen to it that my authority has funded some advocacy work. Independent advocates have dealt with some clients of the social services department. It is also possible to have professional advocates, and I know that the city council has one or two such people who have taken up complaints, some of them against departments of the city council.

I want to draw the Minister's attention to a report called "Elderly People—Care, Participation and Satisfaction", which was based on interviews with more than 200 people, all of them over 75, some in community care, and some in residential homes. The carers, too, were interviewed. We have stressed how important it is that people should be able to make an informed choice. The report, which is reviewed in "Social Work Today" of 30 April, says:

"Only 6 per cent. of elderly people in residential care had been given alternatives, such as sheltered housing. Only half talked to anybody about moving to a home. For some the decision had been made so rapidly that they did not even know they were a permanent resident until after the move."

It is then recorded that when people were first seen they wanted services to take pressure off them. A quarter of those looking for help recorded gardening—their gardens were in a terrible state—as their highest priority, yet they ended up in residential care. In those circumstances, one must ask about the process.

This report is somewhat critical of the practice adopted by some social services departments, but it takes the view that social workers have been, and are, under enormous pressure because of lack of resources. For that reason, discussions with people often do not take place at the appropriate level. Leaflets tend to be left. One organiser of domiciliary care said, "We should give advice, but we

*[Mr. Gunnell]*

don't. We are so busy that I just give a telephone number or a leaflet and don't get personally involved." Everybody knows that elderly people do not read those leaflets. They do not necessarily understand the choices that are available. It is evident from that report that people do not know how to complain if they are dissatisfied with what is happening to them. One woman who was interviewed was under the impression that she should write to the Foreign Secretary and one third of local authority home residents did not know where to start to make a complaint.

This report reveals the importance of having a case review for elderly people. It shows that many people have had very little say. In response to an earlier debate, the Minister emphasised the importance of choice. By way of the Bill, we are correcting omissions with a view to ensuring that people have a range of choices. At one level, we can ensure that there is choice, but we cannot ensure that it is made available to people going into residential care. The amendment would create that possibility. It seeks to provide for a review of people's cases and to ensure that someone is available to speak on their behalf.

The issue of advocacy is important. The Minister said that a great deal of money is being spent on residential care. If that money were spent on community services, it would help far more people. We should look seriously at the many people who are clearly misplaced in residential care, with no opportunity for a review and no knowledge about how to change their situation.

6.30 pm

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I should have thought that of all the amendments that the Opposition have proposed, No. 2, which makes fairly modest demands, would be by far the easiest for the Minister to accept. It does not cost much and requires no money from public funds. It is not exactly the same as implementing the legislation proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). I was reminded of that legislation earlier today when a Conservative Member intervened in my hon. Friend's speech and asked about advocacy and what he was doing about it. I expected my hon. Friend to refer to the proceedings on his legislation that has gone through the House.

Most of my hon. Friends have given examples of people in residential and nursing care who may not need to be there. I do not share the certainty of some of my hon. Friends, but it is clear that some people end up in care away from their own homes, for no other reason than that they lost the opportunity to have aids and adaptations in their homes. The lack of opportunity for changes in their homes forced them out of their homes and into care.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** My hon. Friend referred earlier to some Conservative Members who are no longer present, but who intervened in my speech. I was far too modest to mention the Act that I introduced, but my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, because the anniversary of its Royal Assent is 8 July, those two Conservative Members, in common with every other Member of the House, will receive strong representations from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation—RADAR—and many other voluntary organisations. Therefore, if those hon. Members do not know about the Act now, they will know about it then.

**Mr. Rooker:** I realise that my hon. Friend is much too modest to have mentioned the Act and that is why I mentioned it for him. Those absent Conservative Members should know that they challenged the one hon. Member who has done something about community care problems by putting an Act on the statute book.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) mentioned Devon in an intervention. I visited Devon earlier this year—not the wider part of Devon which the hon. Lady represents, but your beautiful city, Madam Deputy Speaker. I visited two residential homes, both under threat of closure. One, Tory Brook, was purpose-built about 16 or 17 years ago. I do not think that it is in your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, although I saw your letter pinned on the notice board, supporting the demand of residents that the home be kept open. Let there be no misunderstanding about the reason given at the time for the home's closure. By and large, we were talking about all local authority homes.

The hon. Member for Tiverton intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West when he was specifically referring to the private sector. He was not talking about the local authority public sector.

**Mrs. Browning:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Rooker:** I invite the hon. Member for Tiverton to get up from her seat and make a speech to tell the House about social policy and community care policy in Devon. We should like nothing more than for her to make a speech rather than an intervention. We have not yet heard a speech from any Conservative Member on Report or in Committee about community care policies in their parts of the country. We want to share experiences with them. In the past few minutes, the Chamber has heard about the real-life experiences of ordinary people in the example given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe). That is what community care policy is about. We must put legislation on the statute book to meet the needs of ordinary people, their life experiences and those of their carers.

The two homes that I visited in Plymouth were wonderful. I had lunch with and spoke to many of the residents who were in their 70s and 90s. They invited me to visit their rooms, explained their backgrounds and gave me letters to bring back to the Prime Minister, which I sent to him. They told me that people get a false impression when they visit such homes and see that the residents are well cared for and happy, with companionship. Visitors go away saying that the residents so look fit and healthy, can talk and are not stupid, that they should be living in the community.

However, the residents say that the quality of care that they receive in the home enables them to have a quality of life which they do not feel that they could get outside. That does not mean that some of those people could not be in sheltered housing if they had a choice. They may lose the companionship, and loneliness is a great scourge of the late 20th century. We underestimate it at our peril when forcing people to stay in their homes.

I came away from the two homes in Plymouth with mixed feelings. First, many of those people had not been consulted, which is the subject of the amendment. The

proof of that is that one of the residents—I think that her name was Annie—had got a judge to agree to a judicial review of the local authority's decision. That is positive proof that there has been no review of the residents' circumstances.

**Mrs. Browning:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Rooker:** I shall give way to the hon. Lady if she will undertake to make a speech at some time tonight.

**Mrs. Browning:** When I intervened on the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), he was saying—if I understood him correctly, and I asked him whether I had—that as circumstances, local area needs and the needs of the individual residents change, we should be much more open minded about considering the needs of residents who could go back into the community, having been in residential care. By the same definition, particularly with regard to local authority homes, if a review of immediate and future local needs is taking place, as happened in Devon—although I have not had the experience of visiting the two Plymouth homes, I know the situation in my constituency where local needs were deemed to be that more day care back up services, day care services for the elderly, and respite care for carers——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but her intervention is now becoming too long.

**Mrs. Browning:** I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. Based on that——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. That means sit down, in polite language.

**Mr. Rooker:** I simply invite the hon. Lady to make a speech when I sit down and before the Minister winds up the debate. We are under no pressure and do not intend to filibuster. We just seek to make a point about community care policy and share our experiences in different parts of the country to send a signal to the Department so that matters can be put right from April. We are all concerned to ensure that the policy is right. We do not want a uniform policy across the country—it would be stupid for anyone to advocate that. However, we visit each other's constituencies and sometimes we have to share our experiences.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we should congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) on her intervention, which was longer than the totality of contributions made by Tory Back Benchers in Committee and, so far, on Report?

The point being made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), which we need to clarify, is that there are differences between the level of need catered for by local authority part III accommodation and by private care homes. I take a different view from the hon. Lady on the closing of part III accommodation. With the advent and growth of private sector accommodation, part III accommodation has to cope with people who are more dependent and are frequently rejected by private sector homes, whose officials say that they cannot cope with such residents. There is a big difference between private care homes and local authority accommodation described by the hon. Lady.

**Mr. Rooker:** I agree with my hon. Friend. I came away from Plymouth believing that the decision had been taken on ideological grounds, and was not based on the residents' needs. I came to that conclusion because of what I heard in the two homes from the staff, carers and residents. It was that fact that we objected to; no one objects to change based on needs.

I should have thought that the Government would accept the amendment. The examples given today are not random, but it is clear that it is much more complicated for a social worker to assemble a community care package for someone in the community, either in their own home or in some form of sheltered housing, than it is merely to place them in residential care, which is the easy option. It saves on the leg work, the telephoning, the case conferences and avoids a great deal of organisation if one can say, "You need to go into this nice little home where you will be well looked after," and that is the end of the problem. We are seeking to stop that.

One way to place a check and balance on such a policy is to have regular reviews involving the residents, their advocates, friends, advisers and care managers. Like the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), I distinguish between care managers and care providers. It is crucial that those undertaking the reviews do so with open minds and place the users' needs first.

Earlier, one of my hon. Friends quoted the views of the British Medical Association. While the BMA wants the assessments to be separate from the service provision and general practitioners to be involved in the assessment process—which is essential for the patients—it believes that the patients' GPs should not be involved, but someone more removed so that an independent overview is given.

There are many examples throughout the country of people who have entered residential care when they need not have done. How can we, as legislators, draft legislation to help them in future? One way to do so would be to introduce a systematic review. I think that the period of six months, which was mentioned in the debate, is too long. I think that the review needs to be carried out more frequently—perhaps every three months. I would not be too rigid about that, but there must be a review; people must know about it and must be able to share their experiences. Carers, care managers and individual users must know that whatever is wrong or whatever progress is being made can be reported to the review. The residents may well become more independent.

6.45 pm

Private sector home owners have told me that the demographic changes in the country—the increase in the number of elderly people that has occurred this decade—mean that they will have no difficulty in filling residential places, despite the various adaptations and community care plans. Therefore, home owners are not reluctant to encourage residents to become independent or semi-independent. They know that allegations have been made—sometimes with justification—that they want their beds filled.

The financial policy suggests that home owners may have an incentive to keep residents in their homes—they may have, but they need not be the same residents. One test of whether private sector home owners are interested in quality care is whether they have regular, systematic reviews of their residents. If they are not having them now,

one task for Opposition Members next April will be to ensure that local authorities require such reviews to take place. If that policy is carried out, there is a good chance that some residents will regain independence or semi-independence.

**Ms. Jowell:** Given that the average age of elderly people admitted to residential care has increased in the past decade—those of us who have visited homes know that the average age is now about 85—and if the assessment has been properly carried out, it is unlikely that residents will leave residential care. The review process should identify ways in which the regime of the home should bend and adapt to accommodate residents' changing needs.

**Mr. Rooker:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The thrust of the speeches of some of my hon. Friends has been that people are misplaced. I gave an example in Committee of homes in my constituency that had closed or changed, making it necessary to reassess residents. Assessments had not been regular events in the past. In one case, papers were studied and assessments carried out, and it was found that a resident was admitted to part III accommodation 10 years ago, who should not have been. That resident is now happily re-established in the community, but that was an exceptional case.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) said, of necessity, regular reviews involving friends and advocates, users and care managers, will be directed more towards improving the quality of care and the life style in the home than moving people around. Many people who are admitted to residential care today are at an age where they do not want to be moved around. They are looking for peace, tranquillity, companionship and care. They may have left behind the chores of looking after a property. They may have been carers who, worn out by caring for a loved one who has died, now need to be cared for themselves. They are not looking to return to the community or to move around, but they do not deserve to be forgotten. That can be achieved only by a regular review.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the amendment cannot be accepted. It will cost nothing—it contains no requirements for further public sector manpower and calls for no resources over and above those that will be needed if the community care policy operates as Ministers have said it will from next April. The Minister assured us that there would be no change in that policy.

Accepting the amendment would send the signal to the public, voluntary and independent sectors that the House of Commons is serious about community care and that we seriously intend to ensure that these policies, which are by and large bipartisan, operate successfuly from next April in the interests of our constituents. We must advocate a better system that will ensure improved quality. We all know of enough examples to prove that, without giving this idea a statutory basis in the Bill, it will not come about. That is the reason for the amendment.

**Mr. Yeo:** The amendment was moved by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), who made another powerful speech in favour of advocacy. He is an expert on that subject, so his views will always be heard with respect. I shall return to the question of advocacy shortly.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), supporting the hon. Member for Monklands, West, concentrated on the need for regular reviews of people's situations. Of course people should be able to have their circumstances reviewed and to take part in reviews themselves. As time moves on, so their needs will change. Some people may find that their health has deteriorated, so they have become more dependent; others move in the opposite direction—their health improves so the nursing that they needed at one stage becomes unnecessary.

It is also true that a person whose social needs were met by a particular type of establishment—a large home, say—might change his preferences and attitude and require a smaller, quieter, more family-like setting. All sorts of changes can take place, which is why our community care policies are based on the principle that just as the needs of any two individuals may differ, so the needs of one individual can change from time to time. Each individual situation requires an individual solution.

The policy puts the emphasis of care where it should be: on meeting the needs of the users of the services and, in certain circumstances, on meeting the needs of their carers, too. The White Paper is based on the idea of giving local authorities the freedom and flexibility that they need to develop individual solutions which will provide services and support, especially for frail, elderly, vulnerable or disabled people—always with the aim of enabling them to lead as full and independent a life as possible.

The hon. Member for Wakefield underestimated the effectiveness of the code of practice "Home Life", which, as I said in Committee, we are about to update in any case. I believe that there are many advantages in a code of practice which is more flexible than law and which can therefore reflect more quickly the latest attitudes and methods of providing services.

The assessment process and the third stage of our community care policies which come into force next year will eliminate the kind of problem to which the hon. Member for Wakefield referred. He deplored unsuitable placements—an issue about which the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) was also worried. The solution to the problem of inappropriate placements is therefore at hand.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) made an important intervention, which I welcomed, although I was not sure how much it was welcomed by Labour Members. They seemed inclined to tease her a little about it, but what she said about the delivery of domiciliary services in Devon was significant. The Government expect one of the consequences of the third stage of our community care policies to be an acceleration in the delivery and provision of services. We also expect the independent sector to play an increasing role in their delivery.

I must take issue with the argument of the hon. Member for Wakefield that the existence of the independent sector actually works against the process of rehabilitation. I share his concern to encourage rehabilitation——

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Minister distorts my point. I said that the financial arrangements for the private sector reward increased dependence—the Minister must accept that. If someone with a jointly registered home moves a person from residential care to nursing home care, thereby receiving more money, that is a financial incentive to making the person in question dependent. The Minister knows that I can give him examples of that.

**Mr. Yeo:** I do not accept that, for two reasons. The first reason is that the cost of providing nursing home care will be greater, so even if the fee charged is higher, the margin earned on the delivery of the service may be no greater. More importantly, there is a threshold which someone who moves from residential care into a nursing home must cross; the health authority will act as a policeman of that threshold and no one will be able to move from residential care into a private nursing home, even within the same establishment, without the approval of the local health authority.

As it will be the local authority contracting with the providers, the authority will buy a certain number of places. Someone whose condition has improved and who benefits from rehabilitation may leave an independent sector establishment and his place may be taken—the local authority may have contracted to take the place—by someone newly discharged from hospital who needs the services more.

It could therefore be argued that the independent sector favours rehabilitation more than the statutory sector does, as in the latter the local authority may feel that for its own financial needs it must keep its establishments full, and it may be reluctant to move people out even though their condition justifies that.

**Mr. Gunnell:** As the Minister knows, I was a member of a health authority for two years before coming to this place, as well as chairing a social services committee. I was worried because people discharged from hospitals almost always went into private residential care; very few went into local authority residential care. It is not true that local authorities seek to maximise the numbers in residential care. As I explained fully in Committee, my local authority outdid that of the hon. Member for Tiverton in respect of the number of residential homes that it closed, because we did not need the places. We did not try to keep places going for the sake of it. Nevertheless, I was worried about the disparity, so I looked into the health authority's procedures—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but this intervention is getting rather long—although on this occasion the Opposition Whip does not seem to have made any comment.

**Mr. Gunnell:** I shall bring it to a conclusion, then.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Rapidly.

**Mr. Gunnell:** Certainly, Madam Deputy Speaker. The health authority said that when it wanted to place people, it had to place them rapidly; it could not wait for the local authority's assessment procedures because it wanted a rapid move from hospital to residential care.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have tried to give way generously but it is not an incentive to generosity when interventions are prolonged. In any event, the hon. Gentleman has had a good opportunity to make his point.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West referred to the recent BMA report and spoke of health authorities and local authorities each trying to pass on to the other responsibility for meeting the needs of certain people. Health and local authorities co-operate properly in many parts of the country—I have visited a number of them in the past three months.

At member level, management level and at the sharp end there is good co-operation. The Government would take a serious view of authorities that could not reach local agreement about the responsibility for meeting a person's needs. That is a serious matter and local authorities must not try to shift responsibility. The hon. Member for Monklands, West used that as an argument in favour of the provision of advocates.

7 pm

The hon. Member for Wakefield, in support of the need for advocacy, described the tragic case of a constituent. The family to which he referred has the sympathy of all hon. Members. In that context, the implementation of the third stage of our community care policy next year is important. If those policies are properly implemented and agencies co-operate in the right way, such tragic cases as that mentioned by the hon. Gentleman can be minimised.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** What difference will the policy to be implemented in April make to Jimmy Bull's case? No one in a placement of that kind will find any difference. Jimmy Bull is more dependent than many children in care, but he does not have the same legal rights to independent objective monitoring of his circumstances in care.

**Mr. Yeo:** That case will not be affected by the changes in April because they will apply only to people who are coming forward for the first time. The change is incremental and will not affect people whose situation has already been determined.

It is difficult to define who should be the advocate in a particular case, and there is some difficulty about deciding accountability. The hon. Member for Monklands, West acknowledged that conflicts of interest can arise even within a family. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, sometimes residential care is an easy option not just for the authority but for the relations as well. The hon. Member for Perry Barr spoke seductively at the start of his speech when he said that the amendment contained few cost implications. The Government's approach, not just to the amendment but to the whole matter, is driven by the needs of individuals and community care policies. It is not driven exclusively by financial considerations, although of course they cannot be entirely ignored.

As the House is aware, one of the key objectives of our policy is to ensure that service delivery is based on an assessment of need and that clients are involved in that assessment and in the choices made about care provision. The basic aim is an individually tailored care package, not an off-the-peg version that may not fit a person's needs and circumstances or the needs of his carer. I agree with the hon. Member for Perry Barr that that will involve regular reviews, although, because of the diversity of individual need, I do not think that it is possible to prescribe a time scale.

The review of care needs is an integral part of the assessment process. It is right that responsibility for that should rest with local authorities because it lies better with them than with the operators of a residential or nursing home. Many people who will need regular reviews of their care needs are not in residential or nursing homes at all. Our policy guidance "Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond" states:

"Care needs for which services are being provided should be reviewed at regular intervals . . . The purpose of the review

*[Mr. Yeo]*

is to establish whether the objectives set in the original care plan are being, or have been, met and to increase, revise or withdraw services accordingly . . . The other purposes of reviews are to monitor the quality of services provided and, in particular, to note the views of service users and carers and any changes in their wishes or preferences'.

The Registered Homes Act 1984 also states that residents' wishes should be taken into account where possible and "Home Life" recommends that residents should, where possible, have access to external advice, representation or advocacy.

We recognise the importance of advocacy schemes but, as I said in Committee, we would prefer to see them develop flexibly according to local circumstances rather than under a uniform scheme imposed from the centre. The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South confirmed that local schemes exist and flourish. It is undesirable to enshrine every detail in legislation in order to achieve the desired results. We want good practice to develop in line with local circumstances, and we have asked authorities to develop local advocacy schemes or to use those that are already available locally for clients who need that kind of help. We have ensured that material on the subject is included in our guidance on complaints procedures and in care management and assessment guidance. A regular review of care needs and the care plan are fundamental elements of the assessment and care management process. That underpins the whole of our new community care arrangements.

**Mr. Rooker:** We have heard about a northern local authority suggesting to someone with a problem that he should look in Yellow Pages. I could give the name of a London authority which gave exactly the same information. I accept the thrust of the Minister's argument. Will he make it clear that the signal going from the House must be that no local authority should tell advocates, carers or anybody else to look in Yellow Pages?

**Mr. Yeo:** I agree that such a clear message must be sent. We are engaged in monitoring the preparations being made by local and health authorities for the implementation of the policy in April. We are satisfied that the bulk of the 108 social services authorities will have the right mechanisms in place, if they work hard, but some give rise to concern. We have a list of authorities—I shall not describe it as a hit list—to which Ministers will pay close attention. The authorities on the list are not confined to any specific part of the country or type of authority. Given the emphasis that we all place on meeting individual needs, it is quite unacceptable for anyone to be told to look in Yellow Pages. For all those reasons, I invite the House to reject the amendment.

**Mr. Tom Clarke:** This has been an interesting debate and the Minister's speech seems to show that he knows what advocacy is about. He did not go much further than that, but in one sense his recognition is progress. We are debating advocacy and the role of the elderly in a changing and traumatic situation.

The Minister conceded that there was some merit in the argument advanced by the British Medical Association. It is deeply worried, as it said in its document, that, following the changes in April, some health authorities will dispense with their responsibilities by saying that they are matters for local authorities. Some local authorities will say that they cannot cope. In the middle will be the elderly people who expect community care and who will find that it is not there. In response to that, the Minister said that if such a situation arises the Government will step in because it would imply that joint planning was breaking down. That is exactly what it would imply.

In many parts of the United Kingdom, especially in Scotland, joint planning has never operated. There have been no agreements, discussions or policy formulation involving the health authorities and the local authorities, with input from voluntary organisations and users. That is essential if community care is to have any meaning. Hundreds of thousands of elderly people are not receiving the democratic support embracing their rights that any approach to the provision of proper social services seems to suggest.

The hon. Members for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) and for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) were anxious to know more about advocacy, and I am anxious to encourage them in their search for knowledge. They missed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who suggested some further reading for them. It would do them no harm to study the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which clearly defines advocacy, assessment and representation. Perhaps they have the imagination to extend that Act's provisions to the elderly.

The hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) made a constructive intervention, and she should be encouraged to make a speech. She seemed to invite the House to become involved in an argument about Devon. I would not pretend to know much about Devon, but what if one multiplied her example and applied the argument elsewhere in Great Britain?

The one element missing from our arguments is the view that elderly people take of the services that are or are not provided for them. The elderly and their advocates ought to contribute to any debate leading to decisions that are of enormous importance, for good or for ill, to elderly people.

The Bill's origins are to be found in a report published by the Public Accounts Committee five or six years ago —which is recent history in terms of community care— saying that community care was in chaos. As a consequence of that and other strong representations, the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, invited Sir Roy Griffiths to prepare a report. Given his previous report on the health service and the then Prime Minister's belief in market forces, she did so with some confidence. However, after close examination, Sir Roy found that allegations made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and others of my right hon. and hon. Friends were staring him in the face in reality.

My hon. Friend spoke of people being discharged from institutions and channelled into some other form of health care without proper assessment or any evidence of advocacy. Sir Roy was confronted with instances of that happening on a day-to-day basis, in a domestic sense.

Sir Roy's report stated that there had been decades of rhetoric but no action, and that Government declarations had not been matched by resources. He said that there ought to be a community care strategy so that if elderly people, for example, were discharged from long-stay psychiatric hospitals into the community, proper assessments and arrangements could be made and genuine care in the community delivered.

Sir Roy said also that the problem of the boom in the number of elderly people was not being addressed. Even if the Bill is enacted, many elderly people will remain in the community. There is a strong case still for supporting local authorities in delivering services such as home help, so that the elderly can live independently and enjoy an improved quality of life.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Although I have no objection to passing references to matters of general and wider import, I hope that the hon. Member does not intend to go into great detail. He should bear in mind that the House is considering an amendment to one clause, not the genesis of the whole Bill.

**Mr. Clarke:** Your perspicacity, Madam Deputy Speaker, never ceases to amaze me. You called me to order at exactly the point at which I intended to turn to the relevance of advocacy. Our objectives cannot be achieved unless more progress is made with advocacy.

I will conclude in the generous terms with which the Opposition have approached the Bill. Although the Minister has not delivered, at least he acknowledges the problem. Because we have made at least that progress with him, if not with certain Conservative Back Benchers, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Gunnell:** I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

'(IC) Arrangements shall be made by virtue of this section only where the staff of any voluntary organisation or any other person providing the accommodation have undertaken a course of training recognised by the Secretary of State.'.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 4, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

'(ID) Arrangements shall be made by virtue of this section only where the establishment providing accommodation has a staff training plan, available for inspection by the authority, providing for appropriate training for all grades of staff.'.

7.15 pm

**Mr. Gunnell:** When one visits a residential home for elderly people—and I am sure that many of the hon. Members present for this debate have done so—one quickly gains an impression of one kind or another. I refer not only to the home's physical appearance, but to its smell. Some homes immediately announce the nature of their residents—particularly if they suffer from dementia.

That sense of the atmosphere is enlarged when one witnesses the interaction between the staff and residents. One learns a great deal about the nature of the home and whether its residents are settled and happy. I recently visited a home for the elderly in my constituency that I had previously visited two years ago. The moment that I went through the door, I sensed a difference. Whereas before I had found it not at all a lively place, I became aware of a changed relationship between the staff and the residents.

I discovered that about a year and a half previously, someone new had been put in charge of that home—and her attitudes had filtered down to the staff. She attempted to motivate her staff as a team, to meet more effectively the needs of the residents. She has ensured that her staff have an opportunity to develop their skills, and they enjoy greater job satisfaction because they have a better sense of career development.

That is not to say that things are perfect at that home. I was shown all sorts of examples of where greater resources are needed. Much has to be done, and I left with a list of the actions that ought to be taken to improve the residents' physical well-being and facilities.

In relation to training, which is covered by amendments Nos. 3 and 4. There is much written evidence emphasising the importance of staff training in ensuring the quality of residential care establishments. I have quoted previously from the Howe report, which is the most recent to be published on residential care, and to which the Government are prepared to attach credibility. The Howe inquiry examined residential care for the elderly in the local authority sector in particular. The report concluded that training and staff development were a key element, affecting the quality of service and the status of residential care as a profession.

That links two vital aspects of residential care. Training is, indeed, a vital part of any home. It not only determines what skills can be used in ministering to clients, but affects people's perception of their jobs and their future in residential care, and tells them whether it involves a career —a progression. That is important if a home is to give satisfaction.

The amendment requires training issues to be spelt out and to become a statutory requirement. The major issue today relates not to the sense of the amendments, but to whether it is valuable for them to be incorporated in legislation. We are simply asking for the recommendations of inquiries that the Government have backed to be adopted in practice. The Griffiths report, which has been referred to several times today, recognised the crucial importance of training: indeed, all reports on community care have emphasised that. A report from the Audit Commission is due to be published tomorrow and I am sure that training will feature in it. Training is vital to the changes that we all want.

The Bill aims to ensure that private and voluntary sector homes are covered by legislation, that they are used by local authorities and that residents are given a wide choice. It is important in that connection to spell out training requirements. According to the independent report on residential care produced by Gillian Wagner in 1988, published by the National Institute for Social Work —a body which the Government clearly respect——

"The facts speak for themselves. The 1986 survey by the Local Government Training Board states that, of residential and day care staff only 7·5 per cent. working with adults . . . have a social work qualification."

The proportion increased to 24 per cent. if a non-social work qualification such as teaching or nursing was included.

That tells us that a quarter of staff have some training. In local authority field work, 67 per cent. have a social work qualification; the figure rises to 71·5 per cent. when other qualifications are included. The residental figures were, of course, produced in 1988, and we should like to think that they had improved since. The Utting report, however, does not suggest that any great improvement in residential care training has taken place. It suggests that only 30 per cent. of staff have some qualification.

Our amendment focuses on the person who would be in charge of a home. I shall not go into all that the Wagner report says about the complexity of the work and the knowledge and skills that would be required, but it makes it clear that managerial and senior staff in residential work

*[Mr. Gunnell]*

require a full social work qualification. It also makes it clear that the inquiry team wanted a measure such as amendment No. 4 to be introduced as long ago as 1988, stating:

"We recommend, that every establishment—in statutory, voluntary and private sectors—should be required to draw up a staff training plan which should be subject to inspection procedures. The plan should be closely related to the aims and objectives of the establishment, and to its specific functions and tasks."

The report says that the training plans should have a common basis. There should be induction training for those who join the staff and continuing core training for those who become permanent staff members. There should be team development and a regular appraisal of each individual's training needs. People with non-social work qualifications who move into residential work should receive conversion training and those appointed to senior posts should be expected to undertake qualifying training in social work as early as possible. Part of the training should be internal. Regular staff meetings should be held and used to assist the development of staff as individuals and groups.

The strong emphasis that the Wagner report places on training is understandable in view of the evidence that it cites. According to the written evidence that the inquiry received:

"Training is the major preoccupation of contributors, being mentioned in their . . . Recommendations almost twice as often as any other subject. The reasons for this are many. Implicit is a feeling that lack of facilities for training reflects lack of appreciation of residential skills and consequently low status for residential workers in comparison with field workers."

Giving people a sense of professional status is important in how they regard their jobs, and hence to how they are likely to perform their tasks.

The personal evidence presented to the inquiry made similar points. The report states:

"The personal evidence places the same emphasis on training, and for the same reasons, as the formal evidence, but it does add a vivid sense of the difficulty and frustration suffered by those who attempted to go on courses . . . The . . . overwhelming impression about training given by this evidence is how few correspondents have received it."

A total of 116 individual staff from residential homes wrote to the committee, but only 13 appeared to have been given even rudimentary training. Seven of those 13 were working in child care.

Again, I should like to think that the position had improved since the recommendations, but there has clearly been no dramatic improvement. That is why we believe that a training requirement shold be enshrined in legislation. If it is left to private homes, voluntary homes and even to local authority homes to decide on the level of training, progress will be slow towards the realisation of what the Wagner committee saw as the goal by means of which satisfactory residential care would be provided.

7·30 pm

Almost exactly the same views are expressed in the recent Howe report:

"Training plans are of great importance in assisting with the delivery of quality care.

The inquiry therefore recommends that local authorities require the production of training plans, which contain minimum standards, within the inspection procedures for their own homes and those of the private and voluntary sectors and demonstrate their implementation."

Our amendment can, therefore, be seen to be absolutely in line with both the 1988 and the 1992 reports.

Sir William Utting, from his position as permanent secretary, stated that the Howe committee should look into residential care. It did so and it concluded that training was essential and that there should be training plans that affected all members of staff in private homes, voluntary homes and local authority homes.

The Howe inquiry elaborated on that point and said that

"a major aspect of residential care is the need for teamwork and consistency of practice, regardless of who is on duty. The provision of training programmes for complete staff teams is therefore of the utmost importance. New ideas cannot be reliably introduced to a home by training one or two staff outside the home and sending them back to influence the others; if new approaches are to be adopted or attitudes changed, it is necessary for the complete staff team to be involved and identify with the new thinking . . .

The Inquiry therefore recommends that in every home a senior manager should have specific responsibility for (a) developing the staff training programme for the home, (b) ensuring that new staff have induction training, and (c) acting as a link with others responsible for training, such as the authority's training section or local colleges placing students, concerning matters such as training programmes about the authority's policies, secondment planning and placements for students."

The report makes it clear that this is a very important aspect of improving the quality of care in care homes.

The question, therefore, is whether provision should be made for this in legislation. We say yes. Only by including it in legislation are we likely to obtain the improvements for which we look.

Reference has already been made to contracts for residential care. The Consumers Association has recently published a report on this question. The association states that a facilities document should accompany the contract. That would provide assurance, as part of the contract, of the care available. The number of staff and their qualifications would have to be stated. Those details would provide evidence that the staff had been trained and that they had the skills available to meet the needs of the clients.

That could be written into the contract. Progress will be slow, however, if we have to rely on the contractual method alone for the introduction of training. We cannot afford to wait. In the absence of training, we have to pay particular attention to the avoidance of abuse.

An article on abuse and its avoidance has been published by Patricia Riley. It is entitled "Professional Dilemmas in Elder Abuse" and it was written when she was a member of the directorate of Kent county council. In terms of institutional abuse she makes it very clear that the successful avoidance and detection of institutional abuse

"requires quality assurance programmes to be a focus for all staff groups from all agencies . . . and requires staffing of establishments at a level allowing more than 'warehousing' care."

In parenthesis she states:

"have you ever heard the T.V. referred to as 'third member of staff', and seen rows of elderly people sitting round the walls staring into space while the T.V. blares away to break the silence?"

Yes, we have seen institutions such as that. It is not just a question of the number of staff; it is a question of the attention to staff training. That is referred to as an essential part of avoiding institutional abuse.

Staff development meetings and training lead to people being aware of what is going on in homes. Some of the abuse that has led in the past to public scandals could thereby be prevented.

Large numbers of people may be encouraged by this measure to set up care homes. We must therefore provide safeguards. I intend to refer to the reports of two cases that were looked into by the registered homes tribunal. Under the heading "No Place Like Home", my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) published those cases. One is a residential care home in Burnley. According to registered homes tribunal decision No. 129 of June 1990, an examination of that home showed that

"care staff were not sufficiently skilled, experienced or qualified to provide adequate care for the residents . . . this led to serious consequences in the treatment of and attention to seriously ill residents."

The proprietor of the home

"had instructed residents to leave their beds and rooms when they were not fit to do so . . . residents were left with dirty clothing and bed linen and without proper incontinence pads. They were often smelly and damp."

A series of other unfortunate practices was referred to, but the lady proprietor was described as

"the only qualified or senior member of staff and was hardly in attendance, and she insisted that members of staff should tell untruths to cover up her absence."

The second case involved the Harrogate health authority. Regarding a home run by a Dr. Crammer, the tribunal referred to the fact that the quality and quantity of staff required to run and maintain the nursing home on a daily basis was simply not there. It stated:

"There was a high turnover of staff in charge and a persistent failure to meet the minimum staffing requirements of the Health Authority."

The tribunal found in favour of the health authority, which said that the owner

"shows a cynical disregard of social and statutory obligations which arise as a consequence of ownership of a Nursing Home."

The crucial reason for the inclusion of our amendment is shown there.

Dr. Crammer

"sees ownership as an exercise in business matters . . . Much of his evidence went to his concern as to the reduction of costs in the Nursing home. Whilst financial efficiency is to be applauded, that does not mean standards should be reduced below acceptable levels."

It is our contention that if our amendments on training were included in the legislation, there would be a greater guarantee of the level of care that we regard as important for our elderly people.

One of those who spoke to the Wagner inquiry said:

"Training is extremely important, especially for young people, but they must have within themselves a nature that is caring and courteous, to be able to relate to a person's integrity, not just to humour them . . . The dignity of the person is what matters most."

Because that is what matters to us, it is important to provide for homes encouragement, by way of statute, that will ensure training and guarantee acceptable standards of care.

**Mr. Peter Griffiths** (Portsmouth, North): I want to say a few words on the amendments. *[Interruption.]* The frequency and length of interventions are no measure of sincerity.

The issue of training is vital. The spirit in which the amendment was moved reflects the general view held by anyone who has any knowledge or understanding of the needs of those in residential accommodation. However, the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) does not seem to have thought through the clear distinction that exists between the attainment of qualifications and training. They are not the same thing in any sense. It may be that certain qualifications are necessary for some of the staff in residential accommodation. Certainly, in nursing homes, nursing qualifications must be part of the procedure. However, in many residential homes the qualification that is most necessary is not a certificate or diploma, but a genuine concern to assist those who require personal help and support.

Not everyone who works in a residential home is there to further his or her career. It may be that a woman—it is sometimes a man—who takes on the job of care assistant develops an interest and wishes to develop her knowledge and understanding through training courses to which she could be seconded. For many middle-aged care assistants, the main qualification is that they are concerned. The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South referred to protection from abuse. The most potent protection from abuse is the motherly care assistant who would not consider falsifying reports or records at the behest of someone with a paper qualification.

I am not suggesting that we should belittle regular training; it is important for those who hold senior management positions. Our task should be to reinforce best practice. I was interested to learn only last week of an example of best practice in my constituency. Senior managers have been meeting with a highly qualified psychologist and have been putting themselves in the position of residents in individual circumstances. That is the sort of high-level training that is extremely valuable for people in managerial positions.

At the other end of the scale, there is the essential need for basic training for those who work in residential homes.

**Mr. Hinchliffe** *rose*——

**Mr. Griffiths:** I shall give way when I finish this point.

Obviously, staff need to be trained to lift patients properly and to care for their intimate needs in a proper manner. However, that does not require legislation. No sensible owner of a residential home would allow staff to lift patients in an inefficient way because if, patients were injured, there might be challenges in the courts.

7.45 pm

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The hon. Gentleman has clarified his comments. He seemed to be saying that he did not think that any form of basic training was relevant to the role of care assistant. Clearly, he concedes that lifting and handling skills and first aid—basic caring skills—are essential. My concern is that he is giving the impression that Opposition Members are talking about degrees in sociology. We are not. We are talking about basic skills. From 1980 to 1987, I was involved in teaching courses on caring skills. During that time, I saw several hundred students, but there was not one from a private care home. The private care sector did not seem to recognise the need for or the importance of training. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that is worrying? That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) moved the amendment.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I did not give way to the hon. Gentleman immediately because I wanted to finish my point. I do recognise the need for qualifications for some members of

*[Mr. Griffiths]*

staff and the need for basic training for all members of staff. I am prepared to accept that there are probably examples of failure to provide adequate training. However, the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South was giving statistics about the number of people who hold qualifications. He was using that to suggest that the fact that only a tiny minority of those working in residential accommodation have qualifications means that staff are untrained. I was seeking to show that that is not necessarily so.

We want to ensure that training follows best practice, but we need not do that by legislation. The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South said that we should encourage the development of training by legislation. That is an odd choice of words. Legislation should be used when encouragement has failed. We should seek to encourage best practice by making sure that it is widely publicised and well-known. Also, we should encourage best practice through the contract. The amendments deal with that, but the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South did not. When any sensible local authority awards contracts, it will take into consideration the way in which staff are trained.

**Mr. Michael:** Why not make it compulsory, then?

**Mr. Griffiths:** The hon. Gentleman asks me from a sedentary position why we should not require training. The answer is that to require training of all staff, as amendment No. 4 seeks, would mean a massive bureaucratic training programme for thousands of care assistants who would be required to go through forms of training which were beyond the training that they had already and which they were unlikely to want. If they are simply told that they must be trained, some of them will leave.

Not only the motherly ladies would leave. In my constituency, sixth formers work in residential homes at weekends. They take part in the life of the home and bring a spirit of youth and vitality which could not be trained into them. They cannot do training courses when they are in the sixth form at school and they will soon leave for their own education and training.

**Ms. Coffey:** The hon. Gentleman seems to distinguish between care and training. He seems to say that we need people who care and that care is enough. The problem is that caring is often not enough. I shall draw an analogy with residential child care. There may be homes in which people care about the children, while they also abuse them. There can be abuse by someone who is caring. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that caring is not sufficient.

Surely the hon. Gentleman agrees that there should be an objective measure of the balance between caring and the ability to transmit that into skills. If he accepts that, he must arrive at the conclusion that there must be training, in whatever way he cares to put it, for everyone involved in personal and close relationships with another individual which involve care. I am sure that there is not a division between caring and training.

**Mr. Griffiths:** I am grateful for the hon. Lady's comments, because we are basically in agreement. I believe that care is the first and primary component that anyone should bring to the job, but I agree that care is not enough. It must be skilful care and it must go beyond simple emotional commitment to the person who is being cared for. It must be recognised that people have needs, which requires a wider vision. I am sure that the hon. Lady and I do not disagree on that point.

We may disagree, however, on the question of including such a provision in the Bill. It would be nonsense if it were included in the Bill, which applies to only a narrow range of institutions. Even if such a provision applied to all institutions, it would, first, discourage those who were pioneering best practice; secondly, discourage those who did not wish to go beyond basic training in the giving of care; and thirdly, mean that there was a marked increase in costs in homes.

I assure Opposition Members that the idea that running a residential home is a licence to print money is certainly not true today, if it ever was. There is heavy competition, and there are homes that are not full and do not have waiting lists. The idea that there would have to be extra staff on duty while others were on training courses would lead to additional costs. If we want carers to have adequate training and adequate qualifications where necessary, the best way to achieve that would be through encouragement.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's interesting contribution. I commend the fact that he, as a Conservative Member, has made a contribution and it is helpful that he has put forward his views.

The hon. Gentleman makes a point about the private sector's difficulty in financing training. Does he accept that, with the Government's requirement for increasing numbers of individuals who work in care in the private sector to be qualified, the logic of his argument is that the expense falls on the public sector?

The time for the private sector to take training seriously is long overdue. The simple fact is that the private sector relies on people being trained entirely at public expense. It is becoming increasingly difficult for local authorities, because of the pressure on expenditure on personal social services, to train people, who subsequently move into the private sector.

**Mr. Griffiths:** There has always been a movement from training in the public sector into the private sector, whether it has involved people trained at the royal naval dockyard in Portsmouth in years gone by going into private industry or people trained in medical and nursing schools going overseas. That is not new and strange; it is reasonable and it is part of the normal career process in a free society that people should move.

I have not suggested that the burden should fall entirely on the public sector. I have said that the burden placed on the private sector should be a burden that the private sector is capable of bearing. There should be a requirement that will encourage best practice and not simply impose a rigid straitjacket to which the existing residential accommodation units cannot conform between now and next April.

The amendment would lead to a rushed and botched scheme which would not be to the advantage of those in residential care. I welcome the spirit of the amendment, but I hope that Opposition Members will not press it because to do so would be simply to go beyond the point

at which they would be most likely to help the residents in the homes, which is the task that all of us have set ourselves.

**Ms. Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): I support the amendment. The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) made a terrific contribution to our debate.

The Royal College of Nursing report "A Scandal Waiting To Happen", which has been mentioned in the debate, states that a shortage of properly qualified nursing staff will not be solved by the present proposals due to take effect in April 1992. The Howe report, stemming from the residential staff inquiry, says that staff in residential and nursing homes must have proper qualifications and appropriate training. It is essential for people in residential and nursing homes to have a proper training.

There is a need for the training of the complete staff team. We cannot have one person being sent off for training while others in the nursing home are not trained. What would happen when the trained staff were off sick? It is difficult for residential home owners and nursing home owners when staff are off sick and they have no one who is trained to bring in to take over the responsibilities. There should be a proper staff training plan so that everyone in a home has some training before becoming involved with the patients or residents.

I take the point about the need for someone who is caring. It is essential that staff are caring, but it is also essential that they have some modicum of training before they are let loose on the residents or patients.

8 pm

One can see for oneself whether or not a home is well run. I have been to many homes in Rochdale and elsewhere. Some are light and a happy. The residents seem to be enjoying themselves and there is a lot of laughter. In others, everyone seems a little depressed—perhaps not greatly upset but a little depressed none the less. As soon as one enters such a home, one thinks, "There is something not quite right here." Ultimately, that comes from the top—from the person in charge of the home—and is reflected in the training of the staff.

We must ensure that staff are trained. I have referred before to the 90-year-old lady in my constituency who came to see me. She had been in three different homes, both in my constituency and outside it, and was very dissatisfied with the standard of treatment that she had received. For a start, she had seen one elderly lady being bathed by a male member of staff who had no training whatever. Had he had medical qualifications or been trained as a nurse, it would have been different: no doubt the elderly person would not have minded being bathed by him. But an untrained new member of staff had been given the responsibility for bathing all the elderly ladies. Elderly people who have protected their modesty for many years may suddenly find, when they go into a residential home, that they have to take off all their clothes in front of a young man who has no training or qualifications. The young man in question went on to gain nursing qualifications in the end, but that is not the point.

**Dame Jill Knight** (Birmingham, Edgbaston): We are all following the hon. Lady's speech with great care, but can she tell us whether the home to which she refers was a private residential care home or a council-run home? Many of us have visited many of both in our time.

**Ms. Lynne:** Of the three homes, one was a private residential home and the other two were nursing homes.

**Dame Jill Knight:** Were they private?

**Ms. Lynne:** All three were private. The problem exists in all homes—local authority homes, private nursing homes and private residential homes. The need for proper staff training applies equally to them all.

There are incidents in homes throughout the country. I am sure that every hon. Member could cite examples of inadequate staff coverage and training. Sometimes people want to go to the loo but are kept in their place for a long time because there are not enough staff around to take them there. Through training, we must ensure that staff realise that it is wrong for elderly people to have to stop going to the loo, because it is bad for their bladder control and can lead to great problems. That element of training is vital. Young care assistants need to be told that that is not good medical practice.

The Howe report on residential staff says that the majority of care staff have taken short courses organised by a local authority but that, although they are effective in the transfer into residential work, little in the way of staff development and training is monitored. Training should be monitored by local authorities.

Paragraph 21.1 of the report says:

"The inquiry therefore recommends that local authorities require the production of training plans which contain minimum standards with an inspection procedure for their own homes and those of the private and voluntary sectors, and demonstrate their implementation."

In its entirety, the Howe report makes the case for proper training. I agree with the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) that care assistants have to be caring, but I maintain that training, too, is essential.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** Amendments Nos. 3 and 4 would provide for the staff in the homes mentioned in the Bill to be appropriately trained. The case for the amendments was eloquently made by my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell), who went into a great deal of depth and showed his knowledge of the subject.

Training is generally acknowledged to be the key ingredient in achieving high-quality care for those requiring residential accommodation. In spite of that, there is evidence to suggest that a large number of staff in the residential care sector receive little or no training. Some lack any knowledge of even the most basic health care techniques, such as first aid and techniques for lifting and handling.

The needs of those in residential care have changed greatly in the past decade. The incidence of dementia among elderly people has increased, and the figure is likely to continue to escalate given the current demographic trend, which suggests that the increase in the over-75 population will continue into the next century. Elderly people suffering from dementia may eventually lose their individual pesonality. That is the spectacle with which they confront care staff, who are thus required to provide high-quality care for residents from whom they receive little or no recognition or communication, let alone appreciation or gratitude. Appropriate training recognises the great demands placed on all staff who care for the most vulnerable in our society.

*[Mr. Kevin Hughes]*

No one would dispute the fact that the overwhelming majority of staff working in residential care are conscientious and dedicated individuals, in spite of poor pay and working conditions.

In her report, published in 1988, Lady Wagner referred to residential care services as being in a demoralised state, with the staff concerned being held in low esteem. There is little evidence to suggest that there has been any significant improvement in recent years. Lessons have unfortunately had to be learned from the results of inquiries into serious incidents in the residential care sector.

There can be no doubt that, in some instances, the lack of staff training has led to a vicious circle of low morale and poor-quality care. That creates a dangerous environment, in which the potential for abuse, neglect or exploitation exists. Despite the lack of willingness to address the issue throughout the 1980s, the abuse of vulnerable adults, especially older people, is now on the agenda, and several hon. Members have mentioned it. I have no desire to be alarmist or to denigrate the work of the vast majority of highly motivated care staff, many of whom recognise that such abuse exists and would welcome the opportunity to express their anxieties about the situation. Appropriate training that recognises the high levels of skill and commitment required by residential care staff is generally accepted as an essential element in prevention.

Training costs money, however, and many proprietors of residential care homes give such expenditure the lowest priority and do not regard it as desirable. In fairness, I must say that a few homes in the private sector do spend money on training. When I was chair of social services in Doncaster, the metropolitan authority offered facilities for the training of staff in private residential homes. A few proprietors took those opportunities, and their staff were trained alongside the local authority staff. Many certificates were presented to people from the private residential care centre in Doncaster.

I believe that legislation is essential to ensure that training is made available to all staff. The development of the national vocational qualification in care provides an excellent framework, and it is to be hoped that accreditation will soon be given to higher levels. Management training is also essential for those who are responsible for running and managing residential homes.

Age Concern and other voluntary organisations have provided excellent charters in recent years for adoption by those who provide residential care. Those documents recognise the rights of residents to receive care in an environment which affords them the same rights as they would expect to have if they lived in their own home. Those rights include the right to privacy and the right to have their dignity and individuality respected at all times. The documents state that all care offered should start from the basis of promoting independence and choice. If those objectives are to become more than pious sentiments, a rigorous training programme is absolutely essential.

The latest report, entitled "The Quality of Care", has been mentioned more than once in the debate. The committee was chaired by Lady Howe. The report made some 30 recommendations, some of which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell). Half of the recommendations make specific reference to the need for training to ensure the provision of high-quality care.

The Minister may be aware of my early-day motion 175, which has already been signed by 188 Members of Parliament, and which welcomes the publication of Lady Howe's report. I hope that the Minister and the Government will support its call for increased funding to facilitate improvements in training, pay and conditions. I ask the Minister to support the amendments and in so doing to accept the need for legislation for training.

**Mr. Yeo:** When the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) moved the amendment he rightly drew attention to the enormous effect that a change of management can have on the way in which an establishment is run. The whole atmosphere of the place can change. We all agree with him on that. He quoted figures to demonstrate that the proportion of trained workers was lower in residential homes than in some other areas of personal social services activity. That is true, but one of the reasons is that trained workers move out of residential work into other areas of social services.

**Mr. Michael:** Why is that?

**Mr. Yeo:** The reason is that the status of residential work is not as high as some other forms of social services work. One of the issues that I discussed recently with Lady Howe following the publication of her helpful report was finding ways of making it attractive to people, in terms of career development, to work in residential care and stay in it for a reasonable proportion of their career.

**Ms. Coffey:** Does the Minister agree that one of the main reasons why residential workers leave residential work is that it is almost impossible to support a family on the pay that they receive and that little opportunity for training is given to them and they receive little reward for what training they have? Does he agree that experienced residential staff will continue to leave simply because of pay?

8.15 pm

**Mr. Yeo:** People may decide to leave residential work for a variety of reasons. However, raising people's perception of the importance of that work would be a valuable contribution to ensuring that trained staff stay in residential work for longer than they do at present.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made a constructive and perceptive speech with which I entirely agreed. He drew an important distinction between training and qualifications. I shall refer to other remarks that he made.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) and others referred to the Howe report. Most of the recommendations in that report are for the local authorities to follow up, but the Government are considering the actions which the report suggests that we should take and how we might take them forward. As I said, I have recently discussed the report with Lady Howe.

All hon. Members will have sympathy with the aim of the amendments, which is basically to ensure that the highest possible standards of care are provided in all types of accommodation. However, I dare say that it will not

come as a complete surprise to Opposition Members to hear that I intend to resist the amendments. I do so on the grounds of both practicality and appropriateness.

If the amendments were accepted, local authorities would find initially that they could use only a few establishments, because only a few met the requirements. The consequence of that would be that a substantial number of people who currently go into residential care would have to remain in hospital. The amendments would undermine the progress that we are making towards community care and the reforms that the caring for people policy is designed to achieve. Hospital beds would be blocked and a great many people would have to remain at home in conditions with which they might find it difficult to cope.

**Dame Jill Knight:** Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to place on the record the undoubted fact that without the residential home care provided by private sector homes we could not possibly cope with the growing number of elderly people who need such care? Will he make it plain that the House cannot take action that would lead to the closure of large numbers of such homes, because we need them so much?

**Mr. Yeo:** I am glad to have the opportunity to assure my hon. Friend that that is indeed the case. It would be not merely a setback but a major crisis if the independent sector were forced to withdraw to any significant extent from the provision that it currently makes. The private sector houses a large and increasing number of elderly people. So my hon. Friend is right. Indeed, we are determined to ensure that the independent sector continues to make a growing contribution to residential care provision.

Our most recent survey of the statutory sector dates from 1986. It showed that only a quarter of the staff in residential care for adults held a social work or other relevant qualification. It is estimated that as at September 1990, 18,921 care staff and a further 50,556 other staff would need to take a training course, only some of whom have been trained so far. To train all of them would be a massive task, as my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North said.

We have begun to tackle the training agenda with several initiatives, including the training support programme, which has increased in volume year on year to its current level of £29 million, which supports at least £41 million of expenditure by social services departments.

The hon. Member for Wakefield suggested in an intervention that the independent sector lagged behind the statutory sector on training. We do not hold centrally statistics on the numbers of staff in the private or voluntary sectors or on the qualifications that they hold. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that more staff are qualified in the independent sector than in the statutory sector.

We have addressed the need for better work force data by funding the local government board to develop and disseminate advice to social services departments on work force analysis. The board has published the "Social Services Work Force Analysis Handbook" and is holding seminars in various parts of the country.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Minister implicitly criticised the lack of qualified staff in the public sector of residential care, but, by his own admission, the Department of Health does not have any similar information about the number of staff who are qualified in the private residential care sector. Why is that the case? I find it rather surprising.

**Mr. Yeo:** I did not intend to criticise either the statutory or the independent sector. I am merely trying to set out the present position to demonstrate the effect of accepting the amendment.

I recognise that data are inadequate. That is why we have begun to tackle the problem in the way that I described. It would be helpful to everyone if we knew what the situation was. Amendment No. 3 does not take into account the changes that we are introducing in vocational and professional training and education. As the House knows, the Government have supported the development of national vocational qualifications, NVQs, in the care sector. NVQs levels 2 and 3 for residential care staff became available only late in 1990. Their introduction makes a substantial change in vocational education and training. Whereas, previously, completion of a training course, which led to a qualification, was seen as indicative of quality of performance, with NVQs, performance has to be demonstrated in the workplace. Only when that performance has been assessed as competent is a person awarded an NVQ.

As regards amendment No. 4, the Government fully support the development of training plans in appropriate circumstances, as a way to achieve improvements in the quality of service provision. The amendment would require the provision of training plans and training in some circumstances where that would be inappropriate —for example, in the case of a person or a couple who are simply providing homely accommodation. The consequences of accepting the amendment would be that some viable and highly valued establishments might need to close because local authorities would not be able to place people in them.

Finally, the responsibility for training staff within the private and voluntary sectors rests with them as employers, but training is only a part of a complete quality assurance system. One of the great merits of the new framework, which will exist after April next year, is that it will be possible for the underlying aim of both the amendments to be achieved, if local authorities assess whether appropriate quality assurance systems are in place when they are setting contracts. That would include, as a minimum, examining the extent of training provision within a home, and the existence of a training plan. Against that background, I urge the House to reject both the amendments.

**Mr. Rooker:** I am astonished at the contributions from the two Conservative Members who spoke in this debate. they were not what I would call constructive; they were extremely one-sided and were not part of the main flow of the debate around the Bill. We have not really been debating the Bill. From day one we made our position clear—we did not want to debate the Bill, as we agree with it, but we have used it as a vehicle for raising other issues.

On training, I shall not use the quotes from the reports by Lady Wagner and Lady Howe that other hon. Members used. They are all relevant and repetition would serve no purpose. However, one argument from the original Wagner report that should be reinforced is the idea that we should treat all staff as officers and professionals, whatever they do. We should not argue that

*[Mr. Rooker]*

because people are simply care assistants they do not deserve training. All staff who care for our fellow citizens have to be trained and to be treated as equals as regards their professionalism, whatever level of care they offer. I think that that was argued in the Wagner report, but it has not been taken on board. It is reinforced by the conclusions and recommendations of the Howe report, but has not been introduced in practice.

As stated in the Wagner report, it is not merely a question of training. I am prepared to recognise the distinction that the hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made between training and qualifications. Recognition and registration are also issues. I do not wish to mention Maastricht in this debate, but come next year and the free movement of labour in 1993, they will become issues. In some of our European partner countries, one cannot work as a care assistant in residential care unless one is trained, qualified and registered. Therefore, people from this country will not be able to share in that movement of labour.

If it is good enough for our partners in Europe to have a more regimented training system, we should consider it. By and large they beat us on training hands down, in all sectors of industry, which is why their economies are more successful than ours. I am not saying that everyone must be registered to be a care worker, but, as night follows day, that will have to come.

Also, that should not merely affect care workers in residential care. Many care workers give domicilary care. People in their own homes or in group homes will be on the receiving end of the complex care packages that we discussed in Committee and will be taken care of by workers who may not be trained. They ought to be trained. Training should cover that area of care as well as workers in residential care.

8.15 pm

The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North, said something that was self-evident, but the way that he said it was interesting. Opposition Members accept that it is a fact of life that public sector industries train and private sector industries get the benefit. That is true. However, one cannot accept that and argue in the next breath, as many Tories do, that there should be competition between the two sectors and that costs in the public sector are higher and so the private sector is more efficient.

**Dame Jill Knight** *rose*——

**Mr. Rooker:** The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) wishes to intervene and I shall make her the same offer as I made to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning). If I give way, will she make a speech later to show that she is committed to debating community care and is not passing through on the way from one dinner to another to make an aside?

**Dame Jill Knight:** The hon. Gentleman can be as rude as he likes, but there are such things as Select Committees which one has to attend, as I have been doing this evening. It has not been my fault that I have been unable to be here because of other duties. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have not been to one dinner, let alone two.

Is the hon. Gentleman saying that people who go to private residential care homes, paid for by the taxpayer —as many thousands do—have no right to benefit from people who have been trained by the public sector? That is certainly what it sounded like. Is he saying that people who go to residential care homes have no right to ask for help from people who have been trained elsewhere?

**Mr. Rooker:** I offer the hon. Lady a fulsome apology as she has been in the Select Committee dealing with accommodation, but her second point was ridiculous. I am not saying anything of the kind. The hon. Lady has an obsession, and she has proved it because she has only mentioned one sector of provision in her interventions. We are not saying that. We want everyone involved in care to be trained and qualified—within the public, voluntary and private sectors. However, funding for that training ought not to be an impost on one sector, when the three sectors are in competition. That is unfair and that is what causes chaos in the financial arrangements for residential care.

**Dame Jill Knight** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Rooker:** The hon. Lady may shake her head all she likes, but I am right and I know it. She wants training and qualifications, but she is not prepared to will the financial means to take it into account. It is as simple as that.

The public sector is more than happy to train, but in that case it is no good having multi-sector provision. We want multi-sector provision and choice born out of competition. We agree with that, but the hon. Lady does not. She wishes to snuff out the public sector and to establish a monopoly of private sector care. Opposition Members do not agree with monopoly provision of care, whether in the public, the private or the voluntary sector. Therefore, we want a level playing field of costings, although I hate that term, and it is unfair that the training impost falls on one sector.

I mentioned care outside residential homes, and it is important that training takes place in that sector, too. As a society, we are entrusting our fellow citizens to the care system.

The level of care or where it is delivered does not matter. When someone is placed in the care of another it means that society is duty bound to ensure that the quality of care is supreme. The quality of that care cannot be guaranteed unless one knows that the carer, at whatever level, is trained for the job.

The test of quality of care has underlined all our debates. It is the only test that counts. Throughout the passage of the Bill the Minister has been extremely co-operative and we have had extremely interesting debates. In fact, the Bill would have gone through on the nod on a Friday in February were it not for a slight error in the mechanics of this place. However, the Bill had its Second Reading and was considered in Committee in four sittings.

The short debate on the amendment has concentrated on training and I am afraid that the Minister's response has been so unreasonable that we must divide the House.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 68, Noes 155.

**Division No. 48]** **[8.30 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Callaghan, Jim |
| Ashton, Joe | Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)* |
| Barnes, Harry | Campbell-Savours, D. N. |
| Bayley, Hugh | Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)* |
| Beggs, Roy | Clwyd, Mrs Ann |

Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian
Eastham, Ken
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hinchliffe, David
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jackson, Ms Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oiner, William
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Roche, Ms Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Alan Meale and**
**Mr. Thomas McAvoy.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Robert G. Hughes and**
**Mr. Tim Boswell.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

8.45 pm

**Ms. Coffey:** I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

'(IE) Arrangements under this section shall only be made with small homes which register with the registration authority under the terms of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991.'.

The Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991, which is not yet implemented, provides for the compulsory registration of residential homes with fewer than four residents. The requirements placed on the small homes that become registered under the Act are less onerous than the existing provision in respect of larger homes. For example, the only reason for which registration of a small home may be refused is that the owner or other person concerned with running the home is not a fit person. On the other hand, the registration of larger homes may be refused on one of the following additional grounds: that, for reasons connected with their situation, construction, state of repair, accommodation, staffing or equipment, the premises used or intended to be used for the purpose of the home, or any other premises used or intended to be used in connection with it, are not fit to be used; or that the way in which it is intended to carry on the home is such as not to provide services or facilities reasonably required.

The approach to the differentation between smaller homes—those with three or fewer people—is characterised by a general attitude referred to as the lighter touch. The differentation in respect of registration and conditions attached to registration and deregistration is fundamentally illogical and inconsistent. A smaller home will have only to submit an annual return. The person running the home will be required to state briefly his name and address, the number of residents cared for and their category, the names of other persons living at the same address, any criminal convictions since the last annual return and the position with regard to charges made since the last return.

*[Ms. Coffey]*

As can be seen, the information in the return is very sparse. There is no obligation on the local authority to inspect the home. Larger homes have to be inspected twice a year, but smaller homes have only to submit an annual return. The local authority can, of course send an officer to visit and inspect if a complaint is received, but there is no obligation to inspect.

This raises many questions. Let me give some examples. How will the registering authority know if the person running a home leaves or ceases to operate the service during the 12 months after registration or submission of an annual return? What precaution will be taken to safeguard residents from eviction as a result of the eviction of the owner himself? A person might have obtained a number of homes on a rented basis and might be unable to pay the rent or be found guilty of multi-mortgage fraud. In that situation, a small home would cease to operate, and presumably the residents would face eviction. The annual return that a home submits does not require the owner to reveal his financial situation. There is therefore no indication of the stability of the home. The eviction of an elderly person is, of course, a very serious matter for that person and his or her relatives. There is much evidence to suggest that the stress resulting from a move can be terminal for an elderly person. It is very important that elderly people are protected and given stability and protection in the homes in which they reside.

I wonder why there are different registration requirements, particularly with regard to facilities and services. For example, it is proposed that, under section 10(1) of the Registered Homes Act 1984, the provisions concerning fire precautions and drills, precautions against accidents, first-aid requirements, consultations with environmental health officers, training and details about residents should not apply to small homes. It is difficult to see why those regulations should not apply to small homes, as the danger of fire in a small home is as great as in a large home if the premises are not safe, and the risk of accident in a small home is just as great as in a large home. The legislation in respect of homes quite rightly pays attention to this important matter.

Elderly people tend to be very frail. Falls that in a younger person would not cause much injury can fracture the bones of an elderly person or cause other serious injury. The safety of a home is therefore important. Why should this be seen to be sufficiently important in the case of larger homes as to require regulation, but not in the case of smaller homes? There is no evidence that smaller homes are safer than larger homes. Safety is secured only to the extent to which precautions are taken. One can satisfy oneself only by requiring that those precautions are taken. It cannot be assumed that a home with three or fewer residents is safe, but that appears to be what the legislation says. It is therefore totally illogical.

I strongly suggest that the registration for small homes should be the same as for larger homes. The same regulations should apply. If the Minister is unwilling to accept that, the information given on the annual returns that a home submits should be much more extensive. For example, greater attention should be paid to criminal convictions occurring after the registration process. There should be an obligation to declare criminal convictions on the annual return, rather than waiting until the next annual return.

More personal details should be given of the sex, category and number of residents cared for in the home. A copy of the assessment for each person admitted should be given. After all, elderly people's needs are the same whether the person is admitted to a large or to a small home. With that copy of the assessment in the annual return, details should be given about how the care provided has met the assessment of the person's needs, because that is a way of measuring the care that the home has given.

Also included should be the full names, dates of birth, qualifications and experience of persons other than residents not living in the home but employed or working in a voluntary capacity. Details should be given of anybody who helps out in the home or has contact with it.

I am sure that people will say that the amendment is unnecessarily prescriptive.

**Mr. Rooker:** A bureaucratic nightmare.

**Ms. Coffey:** Yes; but if it is a bureaucratic nightmare for small homes, why is it not for large ones? That is what the regulations demand of large homes. It is either right or it is not. There is no difference in the age, frailty or needs of the elderly people admitted, so there should be no differentiation in the standards and quality of care demanded, or how that quality of care is measured and inspected. If it is right for one, it should be right for the other.

Another aspect that the Minister should take into consideration is what the term "registered" implies to the public. If a home has a plaque that says "Registered by the social services department", that implies that the home has a stamp of approval. If the Government are to continue to apply different regulations to small and to large homes, they should make it clear to potential residents that small homes do not offer the same protection as large homes, or residents will not know of the differentiation and will be misled.

In examining why the differentiation is made and reading the introductions to parts of the Bill, it is clear that people think that because a home is small it provides a homely atmosphere and is therefore safer. However, at this very moment, incidents of horrendous abuse of one family member by another are probably happening throughout the country in small homes with a nice homely atmosphere. We should have learnt from past inquiries into incidents of abuse that homes do not protect the people within them. We have taken that seriously on board with children and should do so with elderly people. It is a fundamental mistake to assume that because a home has three residents or fewer, those people are protected by the homely atmosphere and that that home should therefore not be open to inspection or monitoring or be required to have the same fire precaution arrangements or standards of first aid.

Abuse is more likely to happen in a small home because often that is the place where there will be kind, personal relationships that exist within a family, which can become distorted and abusive. Within a small home, elderly people have little ability to complain, because it is difficult to complain to somebody who cares for them every day that

they do not like what that person is doing to them, particularly if, from one year to another, they see no one from outside because there is no inspection requirement.

I think that in a year's time a scandalous incident of abuse will take place in a small home and there will be a public outcry and a public inquiry. Thereafter, the regulations and rules will be tightened up but, in the meantime, before the scandal breaks, the person who is subject to abuse will continue to be abused without protection. Who knows, he or she might even die a victim of that abuse before the public outcry catches up and demands tighter regulations.

In almost every incident of child abuse or abuse within a residential setting, the reaction has been to tighten up the inspection and monitoring process. I hope that we have learnt from all those public inquiries and that we will not set up a system that is open to abuse. We should ensure that the inspection and monitoring process that applies to larger homes is applied also to smaller homes to protect residents.

9 pm

**Mr. Yeo:** The hon. Member for Stockport (Ms. Coffey) was not present in the last Parliament when the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 was debated. The measure received all-party support and many of the issues that she has raised contradict, in some respects, that happy spirit of co-operation.

Taken on face value, the amendment would undermine the purpose of the Bill because it would limit the extent to which local authorities could arrange residential accommodation in small homes for those registered under the 1991 Act.

The Bill's intention is to ensure that local authorities continue to have as wide a scope as possible to make arrangements for residential accommodation for people in need of care. We do not believe that residential accommodation should be restricted to residential care homes and nursing homes. It must go much wider than that and include housing provision where there is an element of care—for example, group homes or sheltered housing. Such accommodation has to be included in the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1991 if local authorities are to ensure that a full range of options is provided to meet the needs of the wide variety of people whom they seek to serve.

A person in sheltered housing may have self-contained accommodation which is similar to that of someone living in the community. Separate but sheltered premises are homes for frail or disabled people, and it would be inappropriate to require such homes or similar premises such as group homes to be subject to registration under the Registered Homes Act 1984.

I have no hesitation in defending the single criterion —the fitness of the person running the home—as the one on which the registration of small homes should be decided. It tackles the principle concern—which led to the introduction of the amending legislation—that some of those running small homes had criminal records or were otherwise unfit to care for vulnerable people. However, it does so in a way that will not deter carers by placing unreasonable regulatory burdens on them.

We must bear in mind the fact that we are dealing mainly with homes that are not run on commercial lines but are run by individuals or families who take in and care for one or two people, perhaps in their own homes. Some people will provide such care under adult placement schemes. It would not be right to deter carers by imposing on them additional demands or costs, which could result in them deciding that it was not worth their while to offer such care, which is just what many people prefer to receive.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stockport will not accept that it is wrong not to draw a distinction—we believe that it is a big distinction—between small homes and larger ones in terms of the requirements imposed on them. I recognise the concern about the intention not to impose a duty of regular inspection on small homes, while local authorities must inspect larger, independent homes at least twice a year. However, local authorities are not precluded from inspecting small homes. They have the powers to do so when they feel that that is necessary—for example, on receipt of a complaint.

We wish to keep the annual return, to which the hon. Lady referred, as simple as possible. However, it must be sufficient to enable authorities to keep track of changes in homes that might affect the standards of care provided and alert them to anything that might require further investigation. We do not want to make the completion of the return an excessive burden.

There will be a duty on those who run small homes to report major changes as they occur. Regulations already place that requirement on people running larger homes and we shall extend the requirement downward when the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 comes into force. The changes that must be reported include changes in the number or category of residents for which the home is registered and any changes in the people running the home. It will become an offence for someone to take over the running of a home if they have not been approved as suitable by the local authority.

We have had to strike a balance between competing considerations. I recognise the anxieties to which the hon. Lady referred, but I do not believe that it would be possible for any legislation, however tightly drawn, completely to eliminate the risk of abuse occurring. It would be impossible to introduce a system that allowed a variety of providers to fulfil their duties while acting as a guarantor against the risk of occasional abuse.

We have brought small homes under regulatory control in a way that addresses the principle concern by providing an opportunity for local authorities to keep in touch with significant changes in those homes and giving registration authorities the power to close unsatisfactory homes. We have achieved that without imposing undue burdens or costs on local authorities. Therefore, I believe that we have struck the right balance and I invite the House to reject the amendment.

**Ms. Coffey:** I do not think that it will come as any great surprise to the Minister when I say that I do not think that the Government have struck the right balance. The Minister said that he believed that the homes to which I referred would not be commercial enterprises. I can see no reason for him to make such an assumption, as it would be possible for many commercial enterprises to grow up around the care of three people. It is wrong to assume that small homes will not be commercial enterprises. That is why I am worried that there are not to be regular inspections.

I welcome the fact that, according to the Minister, there are to be changes in the annual returns to cover some

*[Ms. Coffey]*

of the issues that I raised. I understand the argument that we should not place unnecessary burdens on carers, but we should consider the matter from the view of those who are cared for. The protection of elderly people and those who are cared for should be our paramount consideration.

I spent 20 years of my life enacting foster care legislation to stop children being abused, so I know very well that legislation does not stop abuse. But it does provide a climate of opinion in which local authorities and social services departments become aware of their obligation to inspect. Once a local authority has been asked to carry out inspections, it becomes responsible for ensuring that such inspections are adequate, knowing that if they are not it will be the subject of an inquiry. If we remove the obligation to inspect, that climate of opinion changes and authorities do not feel responsible. Such a climate of opinion will lead to a gap in care, and in that gap abuse may take place.

The amendments that we moved in Committee were designed to deal with certain subjects. For instance, we mentioned the illogicality and the inconsistency in the Government's approach to larger and smaller residential homes. Be that as it may, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Mr. Rooker:** I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 2, line 34 at end insert—

'(1G) Arrangements shall only be made by virtue of this section where the voluntary organisation or other person providing the accommodation makes a contract with the local authority as to the charges they will impose, the frequency of increase, the criteria to be used in raising charges and details of any supplementary changes to residents including a statement of policy regarding any differentiation between residents in accommodation at public expense and other residents.'.

The amendment allows us to discuss once again the charge levied in residential and other homes. We mentioned them in Committee and we had hoped that the Minister would go away and think about them a little more. We were struck by the boldness of his approach in Committee; he thought that it was fine to levy extra charges for second helpings at dinner. He said that that was part and parcel of the system.

We are pleased to see the Secretary of State present for the debate on this important amendment. I presume that she left her ring fence outside—we have been looking for it all day.

**Mr. Michael:** Perhaps she has won it.

**Mr. Rooker:** That is quite possible. In any case, we are pleased to see her here.

I am not attacking any particular sector. Some residential and nursing homes in this country provide top-quality care without extra charges for second helpings of food, single rooms, newspapers, hairdressing, trips, breakfast in bed, alcoholic drinks, incontinence pads or toothpaste. Such homes are, however, few and far between. Many homes do charge for these services. We should like to know whether the Minister has thought about the subject again.

Before local authorities take out contracts with homes covered by this Bill, they ought at least to know what they are paying for. They ought to know in advance what the supplementary charges are and how often charges are increased.

In passing, I should like to mention the immoral funding arrangements brought about by the Government's practices. I refer particularly to the nursing home sector. All residents in such homes receive exactly the same service—there are no supplementary charges for different services—but residents pay different fees depending on whether they are staying at public expense with DSS income support or at their own expense, perhaps by spending the assets from a family home.

I do not object to their being regarded as disposable assets. I cannot, however, see the morality of allowing home owners to charge some people more for the same services of the same quality. The differences are enormous and range from £70 to £90 a week for exactly the same services. Home owners have to ensure that a third or perhaps half of their residents are self-funded.

The first question one is asked when seeking a nursing home for a friend or a relative is, "Do they have their own home?" I was asked that three times last year. In the case of single people, a residence for disposal immediately signals, that, for a while, such people can pay more. Residential home owners would go bankrupt if they did not charge some people more than others.

Why should some residents subsidise the Government who are not paying the full whack in income support? There is a degree of immorality about that. No Minister has ever addressed that problem in correspondence, in written answers, in Committee or in a public speech. In Committee, the Minister spoke about supplementary charges for extras, and when one of my hon. Friends spoke about an extra charge for dumplings the Minister seemed to think that that was okay. I emphasise that differing charges apply for the same level of service and I am not discussing charges for single or double rooms.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): It is a wealth tax.

**Mr. Rooker:** It is.

If differential charges were abolished overnight, many homes would go out of business, people would be thrown on the street and on the public purse. It is never fully explained to relatives or to the people immediately concerned that they will have to pay more if they have their own resources. The House should not remain silent on the issue, and the amendment provides an opportunity to raise the matter.

**Mr. Bayley:** Money is the key to care: with it people can enter care: without it, they are locked out. That was brought home to me today when I received a letter about a constituent of mine from the trade union branch of which he was a member about 20 years ago. I shall read two short extracts:

"Mr. Rogers is 88 years old, and until his wife died in April of this year they were both residents of the Fulford Nursing Home in York . . . for the last two years the annual increase in his payments have been immediately absorbed by increased residential fees . . . Mr. Rogers finds he can no longer afford to stay in the Home and has been obliged to seek temporary accommodation with his son. He does not know where he will go next, and fears that he will not be able to afford the cost of residential care in the future. He tells me that many elderly and frail people now live in daily fear of losing their homes. It seems to me that it is intolerable that the elderly are being

put in this situation, and I would be obliged if you draw attention to the plight of Mr. Rogers and other elderly people in residential care."

The plight of Mr. Rogers is not isolated. An article in my local paper, the *Yorkshire Evening Press*, describes the case of two elderly women, Mrs. Lily Lupton aged 83, and Mrs. Mary Brennan aged 79. They had to leave the Riverside Lodge nursing home when it increased its charges to them by £35 a week. Ironically, the home's motto is "Where friendliness abounds". I was a member of York health authority at the time that those two elderly ladies were evicted from their home. The cost of caring for them fell immediately on the public sector.

9.15 pm

Earlier this year, the Social Services Policy Forum—a consortium comprising the Association of Directors of Social Services, British Association of Social Workers, National Institute for Social Work, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in York, and other bodies—published a report on social services financing. It stated that the Government's community care reforms raised expectations, and added:

"These expectations are likely to be dashed unless there is an informed public debate about the level of services that should be available and the resources required to provide them."

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. I have listened attentively to the hon. Member, but the amendment specifically relates to charges, not to the overall provision of community care. I hope that the hon. Member will return to the subject matter of the amendment.

**Mr. Bayley:** I take your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is necessary for public provision to be made, to ensure that residents whose charges are met at public expense will obtain the care that they need. That is extremely hard for social services departments to plan, until such time as they are aware of the Government's budgetary allocation for the social services reforms.

I hope that the Secretary of State will take account of four matters. The current distribution of funding from the social security budget relates not to local care needs but to the local distribution of private residential care homes. That pattern should not necessarily be reflected in the long-term allocation of funds.

There is a care gap—vividly illustrated by the two cases that I cited—between the level of support available in the form of social security payments and the cost of residential care. Unless that gap is closed, those requiring care will lose the accommodation that they need. Where such a gap exists, who picks up the tab? It is usually the resident's relatives, but often they are themselves elderly and on low incomes. Their ability to top up fees is limited, and they may be caused considerable hardship.

In other cases, no one is available to top up the fees, and in those circumstances the resident will suffer the fate that befell my constituent, Mr. Rogers.

I also ask the Secretary of State to take note of the existing strain on social services departments' budgets. They are under enormous pressure——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) is relatively new to the House, but he must address the amendment, which concerns charges and negotiations between local authorities and residential homes. I am sure that the hon. Member can be creative and constructive in speaking to the amendment, but he is not doing that. He must either speak to the amendment or sit down.

**Mr. Bayley:** As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) suggested, there should be no gap between the quality and range of care provided for those who are in homes at public expense, and provision for those who are able to pay for their care. Many people in private homes are required to pay additional charges on top of the basic fee, which will presumably be paid by the social services authority after April next year. I fear that, unless the Government clarify the level of funding of local authorities now, nine months from today, when the reforms come into operation, authorities will have had no time to negotiate contracts with the care providers to ensure that a comprehensive package of care is available.

**Mr. Skinner:** My hon. Friend has identified a cornerstone of community care provision. His point—which, let me add, relates to the amendment—is that the amendment refers to the differentiation that may or may not exist between private and local authority care. I hope that you are listening carefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is very important. My hon. Friend is pointing out that, if local authority funding is reduced or is not provided in the necessary proportion, there will be a difference between public and private care. I cannot for the life of me see how he can speak to the amendment without referring to public funding, and I hope that he will continue. I am listening carefully.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** We are all listening carefully; that is why, when the hon. Member for York was out of order, I drew the fact to his attention. His most recent remarks, however, were in order.

**Mr. Skinner:** He is in order now.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I want to listen to the hon. Member for York, not to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

**Mr. Bayley:** Many studies show that a wide range of services for elderly people demand extra payment on top of the basic fee. They include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, chiropody in almost all homes, personal laundry in a few homes, medicines, hairdressing, incontinence pads—which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr—and, in some instances, entertainment. Unless local authorities are prepared to pay a comprehensive fee to cover all those services, we shall not secure the classless society that the Government wish to introduce. There will be two classes of resident: one class will enjoy the rewarding quality of life that old age deserves, while the other will be faced with a lesser quality of life. That is indefensible.

**Ms. Lynne:** I wish to pursue the question of supplementary charges, to which the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) briefly referred. I understand that community health workers are not allowed into residential homes and, in particular, nursing homes, and I fear that nursing homes will start to charge for physiotherapy and other back-up facilities.

At present, a general practitioner can be called in and recommend physiotherapy, but the physiotherapist cannot

*[Ms. Lynne]*

enter the nursing home. I am worried about the fact that patients will face charges because nursing and back-up facilities are not allowed to come in.

**Ms. Jowell:** Great uncertainty surrounds the implementation of the legislation. The Minister has provided us today with welcome assurances that the plans will proceed as intended, but I have one or two points to make about the funding of residential care which, if not properly addressed, will further compound the difficulties referred to in the amendment regarding the charges levied by individual residential care homes and nursing homes.

If I may identify one source of uncertainty, according to a letter sent by Mr. Laming, of the inspectorate of the social services and Mr. Foster of the management executive to all directors of social services:

"The current broad patten of funding through social security support should be regarded as an implied commitment for 1993-94 . . . in respect of new clients requiring residential or nursing home care."

Otherwise interpreted, that means that about the same number of nursing home beds should be taken up after April 1993 as would have been taken up under the old system before 1993.

There is a discrepancy between the estimates offered by the Department of Health and the Local Authority Associations as to how many new beds there will be. The Department of Health estimates that there will be between 20,000 and 25,000. However, the present rate of growth, at 8 per cent. per annum, suggests something more like 35,000 to 40,000 beds. That creates uncertainty not just for local authorities but for those homes that are directly affected. It has a direct bearing on their financial calculations and therefore on the additional income that they are likely to have to raise by levying charges to close the gap.

I am particularly concerned about the responsibilities that will be placed upon local authorities after 1993. They will have to underwrite the full cost of a place in a residential or nursing home. If the funding level is not right and local authorities do not have enough money to cover the cost of all the people who have been placed in homes, or if, in particular, the manner of distribution is not right, local authorities will be engaged in searching for cheaper and less effective solutions. We must also assume that nursing homes and residential care homes will be looking at new ways to levy supplementary charges to make up for the money that is not available from the local authorities in order to meet the full cost of the care that they provide.

In the early stages of the national health service reforms, the Government found it possible to provide contingency funds so that some trusts, for instance, could avert their looming financial crises. I ask the Minister to announce similar contingency funding in order to provide protection for elderly and vulnerable people throughout what is likely to be a pretty choppy transitional period.

**Mr. Yeo:** I am glad to be able to advise the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that I have had another think about the line that I took in Committee, in particular on the question of additional charges. I know that he will be pleased about it. I recognise that I was wrong in Committee to take the line that I did. I did not express myself anything like robustly enough.

I have no hesitation in saying that the Government s absolutely no reason to intervene in the negotiatio between home owners and individual residents who a paying their own fees. We do not wish to dictate what a freely negotiated terms between two private parties. W see no reason to impose our judgment on what tho parties should agree to.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** We are talking not about companies the City but about vulnerable elderly people. I a astonished to hear the Minister's language. Will he list to what Opposition Members have said?

**Mr. Yeo:** I know who we are talking about, just much as the hon. Gentleman does. In fact, the catego with which we are dealing now involves those who are ab to meet the cost of the charges from their own resource Therefore, their vulnerability is qualified by that.

9.30 pm

**Mr. Michael:** Will the Minister accept that many peop are in difficult circumstances when decisions of this sort a being made? Often, not only the individual, but the care who share in those decisions, do not have profession advice. I am sure that he is aware of the document that h been produced by the Carers National Organisation whi shows that 33 per cent. of carers have no access professional services or support. Therefore, does he acce that we should be making sure that there is protectio along the lines urged by my hon. Friends?

**Mr. Yeo:** Opposition Members are suggesting th people should be denied the right to use their savings in t way they choose. No Conservative Member will support measure that compels people to limit their charge for particular service to a level that has been set arbitrarily ar centrally and which prevents people from legitimate devoting resources to obtaining a service if they are able do so. That would be an absurd imposition. It would east European in its nightmarish consequences.

It is for local authorities to negotiate the best possib terms for the residents they sponsor and we will expe them to negotiate toughly in order to secure the best valu for money. If the analysis given by the hon. Member fo Perry Barr is correct, the effect of preventing home owne from setting their own charges would be directly to rai the cost to the public sector of keeping other residents i those homes.

**Mr. Rooker:** That is exactly the point. The public secto —the Government through the Department of Soci Security—can bulk-buy by using income suppor Therefore, it gets the same service at a lower cost than m individual constituents who cannot bulk buy because the have an asset. In effect, such individuals are institutionall ripped off. That is indefensible.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have already explained to the House why do not think that the Government or the House shoul seek to impose terms between two private parties that a free to negotiate. As I have said, the consequence accepting the analysis of the hon. Member for Perry Ba would be substantially to increase the cost to the taxpaye of keeping the residents in residential homes and privat nursing homes.

I must correct the impression that the hon. Member fo Perry Barr gave about the view that I expressed i Committee on the issue of extra payments. I do not thin

that any of my remarks in Committee could be construed as meaning that basic services could be subject to any additional charge. Part of the contracting process, in which local authorities will be engaged after April next year, is to ensure that home owners provide a proper and adequate standard of service for all residents, including all publicly funded residents. I must make it clear to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) that I see no reason why those same residents should not purchase additional items or services out of their own resources or the resources of their families.

The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) asked about entitlement to NHS services. Those who live in residential homes have the same rights and access to NHS facilities without payment of any charge as they would if they were living in their own home.

**Ms. Lynne:** In nursing homes, even if someone is registered with a general practitioner, he or she does not get the community nursing facilities, physiotherapy or any of the other community health services.

**Mr. Yeo:** It is part of the contract that the services provided by the nursing home will include some that would be health services if someone was not living in the nursing home. The price charged by the nursing home includes those services. For that reason, they will not also be available free under the national health service.

**Mr. Skinner:** When the Minister was banging the Dispatch Box, he said that the Government had no intention of interfering between bodies that make charges or otherwise. He took a strongly purist line. Why do the Government interfere with dental charges, and charges for specs and teeth? Why do they force local authorities to put rents up? The Government cannot have it all ways. The Minister cannot say that the Government do not interfere and, then, when they want to hammer the people at the bottom of the pile by shoving rents up and having health service charges, give a different set of criteria. If the Minister does not intend to interfere with people who negotiate will he, as a member of the Government, vote for the 30 per cent. for the top people's salaries, or will the Government interfere?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I hope that the Minister will not be tempted down that route.

**Mr. Yeo:** I welcome rather belated arrival of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in the proceedings on the Bill. We had half a day on Second Reading and 10 hours in Committee. I have been on the Bench since 3.40 pm, whereas the hon. Gentleman has just drifted in after what must have been a pretty good dinner.

**Mr. Skinner:** Unlike the Minister's hon. Friends sitting behind him and unlike those who are missing, I do not come in here half drunk because I do not go to the bars. So——

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. No hon. Gentleman or hon. Lady is the least bit drunk in the Chamber.

**Mr. Yeo:** I was doing my best to be charitable to the hon. Member for Bolsover because he was talking such indescribable claptrap that I thought that there was only one possible explanation. Naturally, I accept his assurance that he has not been anywhere near the bars.

I will explain to the hon. Member for Bolsover a distinction which, I hope, is not beyond even his understanding of these matters. My concern is that there should be no interference by Government or by Parliament between two freely contracting parties when both are in the private sector. It is quite another matter to say that the same principle should apply when individuals are contracting with the state, whether for the renting of a council house or for the purchase of dental services or eye tests. There is no point of comparison between the delivery of those services, the price at which they are charged and the way in which that charge is set, and the situation between the private owner of a private residential or nursing home and a private individual who has the resources to pay his own way into it. There is no point of contact between the two cases.

The hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) raised a point about the shortfall in funding. After next April, local authorities will be increasingly important purchasers of services from the independent sector. After a year or two, they will be by far the largest purchasers. As a result, they will be able to obtain good value for money from the providers. We should expect them to negotiate extremely toughly to ensure that the present gap between the charges levelled by residential homes and nursing homes in some areas and income support limits—there is no concealment of that fact, which we acknowledge—should be narrowed by the negotiating position that the local authorities will then be in. To the extent that there is still a gap, we will consider it when settling the funding arrangements for the policy.

The amendment would represent a gross intrusion on people's ability to decide the level at which fees should be set for residential homes. It also implies that the local authorities will not build into their own contracts arrangements that govern the basis on which fees will be increased in future. For those reasons, it would be in the interests of all those who will benefit in the long term from our community care policies if the House rejected the amendment.

**Mr. Rooker:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall reply. I became more and more angry as the Minister spoke. You or I would hardly expect to walk into a shop in Whitehall or Victoria tomorrow and be asked to pay a different price for a commodity on the shelf depending on whether we got our money from the DSS, from investments or as salary. The Minister now accepts that that is what will happen. Frankly, that is just not on. The Minister says that, from next April, local authorities will be in a position to bulk-buy at a lower cost residential care places, but such deals will not be forthcoming in respect of people who fund themselves.

Some 68 per cent. of dwellings in England are owner-occupied and there will be a substantial increase in the number of people who will be releasing their disposable assets as the first call in respect of their care costs. I make no complaint about that, but I cannot see the morality of charging people more than their neighbours on a daily and weekly basis for the same service in the same home just because their neighbours are funded by the local authority, as it will be in April, or the DSS, as it is at present. We want equality of treatment—the same charge for the same service, and I find it unbelievable that the Minister should regard that concept as in some way east European.

*[Mr. Rooker]*

It would be a wholly different matter if this were a question of taxation, although I suppose that, in a round-about way, that is what it is. The nursing home owners do not like having to do what they do; they have to do it to stay in business, but they are apologetic about it. They have told me that they have never heard a Minister address the issue in public. Now, we have the Minister's remarks on record and I suppose that we must be grateful for that.

If there were a price commission in this country, we should be the first to complain that our constituents were being charged different prices for the same service. That position cannot be tenable and I do not see how we can possibly accept it. It is as though Sainsbury's were charging people different prices for the same goods because their income came from different sources. The Minister must know that there is no foundation for his argument and that he could not sustain it before an independent body.

The practice has been allowed to grow like Topsy. The Government intend to allow it to continue and to shift the blame to local authorities from next April.

We did not intend to vote on any of the amendments and we are not complaining about the Bill, but the Minister has made me so angry that I shall be happy to hear whether my hon. Friends wish me to withdraw or press the amendment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Vote."] In that case, I shall press it.

*Question put*, That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 53, Noes 154.

**Division No. 48]** **[9.43 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Boyce, Jimmy
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ms Ann
Connarty, Michael
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian
Eastham, Ken
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek *(B'p Auckland)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hinchliffe, David
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jowell, Ms Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C & S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rooker, Jeff
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Str'gf'd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Dennis Skinner and**
**Mr. Thomas McAvoy.**

**NOES**

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chaplin, Mrs Judith
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Ms Cheryl
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nicholas
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W H'f'rdshire)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malone, Gerald
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Timothy Boswell and**
**Mr. James Arbuthnot.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Mr. Michael:** I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 2, line 34, at end insert—

"(11) The making of an arrangement by virtue of this section shall not preclude the making of any other

arrangement or payment under any other enactment in respect of any other occupant whereby the same accommodation is treated as sheltered accommodation.'.

I am grateful for the opportunity to move the amendment briefly—I hope without further provocation from the Minister. We get the impression that he has decided that his reputation for being reasonable was voiced too generously by the Opposition. Perhaps that is why he reacted so fiercely to the sensible amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) a short time ago. That is our explanation. I now invite the hon. Gentleman to balance his response to the previous amendment with a measured and constructive response to amendment No. 9, because that is the way in which he responded in Committee.

The amendment will give the Minister the opportunity to do what he promised—to examine the matter and, if necessary, to amend the Bill on Report. The point is a simple one. Where premises are used for the type of arrangement for which the Bill allows and are, therefore, defined as residential accommodation, and not as sheltered accommodation, it would be possible to introduce flexibility on one side of the line and reduce it on the other.

We seek an assurance from the Minister that where the type of accommodation for which arrangements can be made under the Bill can appropriately be dealt with as sheltered accommodation that will be possible under appropriate legislation. I hope that the Minister can assure us that such flexibility can continue to operate. I look forward to his response.

**Mr. Yeo:** After 10 hours in Committee and six hours on Report, I think that it was inevitable that the constructive mood would have to come to an end. I was glad of the chance to find some issue on which there was not complete harmony between the two sides of the House. Unfortunately, I cannot maintain my disagreeable mood.

We debated this issue in Committee and since then I have reconsidered the need for the safeguard that the amendment would introduce. I can confirm that it is our intention, as I said in Committee, that local authorities should have the widest possible flexibility to identify the most suitable type of accommodation to meet the needs of each individual who comes forward for assessment. That package of care will sometimes include sheltered housing.

It is worth pointing out the significance of that type of accommodation. The work done by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in 1990 showed that, on average, out of every 100 people aged 65 and over, 89 were in ordinary housing, just over five were in various kinds of communal care and 5·6 per cent. were in sheltered housing. That is an important component of the total range of options available to local authorities. That accommodation is making a significant contribution to meeting the needs of elderly people. We do not intend that the Bill should jeopardise that contribution.

I believe that the assurances that I gave in Committee, and which I have re-examined, still hold good. For that reason I hope that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) will be able to withdraw his amendment.

**Mr. Michael:** I am pleased that the Minister has returned to sweetness and light. I can understand his sense of frustration in the course of a long debate, but I can only commend the example of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and my colleagues who have remained constructive and positive throughout our consideration of the Bill.

In view of the assurances that the Minister has given, which I am pleased to welcome, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

9.57 pm

**Mr. Sims:** I do not wish to detain the House, but I understand why the Opposition wanted to debate community care, which is an extremely important issue that merits such debate. However, it is a pity that they chose to stage the debate in the way that they did.

The Bill is a small, technical one and I believe that it would have been helpful to allow it to go through swiftly. We could then have devoted a day by some other means to debate the range of issues covered by community care. Alternatively, we could have had a longer Third Reading. I should have liked to emphasise a number of issues raised in our various debates and I suspect that my views would have commended themselves to the Opposition. I intend to forgo making such a speech, however, as I do not want to be out of favour with the Whips or, in particular, my parliamentary colleagues.

However, I want to take the opportunity to correct the impression given by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) in Committee last Thursday. As can be seen at column 116 of the report of the Committee's meeting, the hon. Gentleman was very critical of the home help provision of the London borough of Bromley. It is true that that borough has separated personal care services and domestic cleaning services, and it is true that the latter were put out to tender. All the tenders that were offered were rejected, on the ground either of cost or of quality, so the cleaning service remains in house. Bromley has drawn a clear distinction between people living in their own homes who need a degree of personal care—bathing, perhaps cooking, and so on——

*It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

*Ordered,*

That, at this day's sitting, the Community Care (Residential Accommodation) Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Sims:** I was saying that Bromley has drawn a clear distinction between those who need a degree of skilled help and those who can look after themselves perfectly well, but may have difficulty with, for example, Hoovering and cleaning the bath and the loo. I suggest that it is a sensible use of limited human resources to use for cleaning those who can help in that sort of way, as distinct from those who are able to give more personal care. There is no question of neglecting people who use just the cleaning service. If help is needed, it is available at the end of a phone line. There are neighbours, friends, possibly the cleaning person, and in many cases the care link system, by which, at the press of a button, the person in need is put straight in touch with the help centre.

I hope the hon. Member for Wakefield will accept that if he did not misinterpret the schemes that Bromley runs,

*[Mr. Sims]*

he misunderstood them and that they are an example that other boroughs could follow, with a view to achieving greater flexibility of home care services.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** My central point concerns how a home care organiser determines on any Monday morning whether Mrs. Smith needs a carer or a cleaner. The hon. Gentleman has not addressed that point.

**Mr. Sims:** I have given an exact answer—that a person should be assessed as to his needs.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** Every day?

**Mr. Sims:** Of course not.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** That is the point.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. The hon. Gentleman must not intervene from a sedentary position.

**Mr. Sims:** If a person is coping perfectly well, but needs someone once a week or once a fortnight to help with cleaning, it is not sensible to provide him or her with more skilled help. As I have said, however, there should be easy access to a higher degree of help if circumstances change.

I hope that the House will not divide on the Third Reading, as I am sure that we should all like to see the legislation go through. There are many questions yet to be cleared up, and there are many understandable concerns about community care, but the sooner local authorities can learn more about how they will have to operate the system, particularly with respect to the resources available to them, the better.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.*

## Miss Helena Thompson

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.3 pm

**Mr. David Atkinson** (Bournemouth, East): As we have been reminded by the business that has just been transacted, the Government's long-awaited plans for community care based on the Griffiths recommendations are to be implemented on 1 April 1993. Henceforth, social services authorities will assume full responsibility for community care of the frail, the elderly, the disabled and other vulnerable groups to enable them to live as independently as possible. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker** (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber should do so quickly, and not stand in the aisles.

**Mr. Atkinson:** The three years between the legislation being enacted and its implementation have raised the expectations of professionals, carers and patients. They have also enabled a better appreciation of the costs involved to ensure that implementation will ultimately be successful.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has repeatedly confirmed that resources will be adequate, so I look forward to learning tonight from the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), when local authorities can expect to learn precisely how much they are to receive next year to enable them to complete their community care budgets.

One of the principal areas of care for which expectations for a better quality of life in the community are high is provision for the mentally ill. I have taken a personal interest in that subject as honorary parliamentary adviser to the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. My interest is firmly shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), whom I am glad to see in his place tonight.

Your records, Madam Deputy Speaker, will show that I do not make long speeches in this House. However, I made a far longer speech than I intended on Second Reading of the Mental Health Act 1983, only because, regrettably, too few hon. Members were waiting to follow me in the debate. That speech enabled me to describe in detail the nature and problems of schizophrenia, of which I had not been aware until a friend, who I did not know was a sufferer, committed suicide because he could not face another day.

Fortunately, there has been a growing public awareness of schizophrenia in recent years, as well as awareness of how widespread its incidence is. It is estimated that 1 per cent. of the population—some 600,000 people—can expect to suffer at some stage during their lifetime. That growing public appreciation is due in large measure to the excellent work of the NSF, MIND and, more recently, SANE—Schizophrenia—A National Emergency—which is currently raising £3·5 million for research into schizophrenia and has introduced a helpline for sufferers to telephone when they are desperate. Those organisations welcome, as I do, the introduction of the specific grant last year to social service authorities, which was ring-fenced for the

mentally ill and increased by 50 per cent. this year. They also welcome the doubling of the size of the homeless mentally ill programme in London.

In turn, Parliament should recognise the major contribution that the voluntary sector makes to services for the mentally ill and their carers and relatives, as we do through the Health Departments' funding. I look forward to learning from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary how much extra support those voluntary organisations can expect from April next year, including the resources for organisations providing shelter for the mentally ill outside London in areas like Bournemouth, which do not benefit from much of the new money being made available to the south-east.

One of the greatest challenges that faces our so-called civilised society today is to reverse the cycle of deprivation and despair that afflicts the homeless mentally ill, a problem to which far too many people continue to turn a blind eye. That is why I welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to his new post, to which he brings his previous experience as Minister responsible for housing and his wide experience in dealing with the handicapped before he came to the House.

Regrettably, whatever provision is made in the community, there will always be a minority among the mentally ill who pose such a threat to themselves or others that they need to be admitted to hospital compulsorily under the Mental Health Act 1983. Although there appears to be widespread agreement that the provisions of the Act are satisfactory, concerns continue to be expressed, not least by the NSF, regarding the interpretation of the Act as described within its code of practice. The code of practice is the prime focus of this debate. Unfortunately, I must refer to a tragedy in my constituency to illustrate the deficiencies in the code.

In January 1990, I prayed that the code of practice issued by my hon. Friend's Department in December 1989 be withdrawn. My prayer received support from both sides of the House, and Lord Mottistone tabled a similar prayer in the other place. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to his continuing and personal commitment to sufferers of schizophrenia.

Our opposition to the 1989 code was based on its failure to qualify adequately the powers created by the very Act under which it was issued. I believe that the 1989 code had three major deficiencies. First, section 2(2)(b) of the Act clearly states that compulsory admission of an individual to hospital for treatment can be made

"in the interests of his own health or safety or with a view to the protection of other persons."

By the use of the word "or" the Act stresses that any one of those three criteria is a sufficient condition for compulsory admission. But as the code lacks that stress, it is possible to form the impression that all three criteria must simultaneously be present before the sufficient condition for compulsory admission has been met.

The second deficiency is the 1989 code's emphasis, found in paragraphs 18.23 to 18.28, on the patient's freedom to dismiss himself from treatment even under compulsory admission. That emphasis does not exist in the Act. A code of practice cannot create rights or bestow freedoms that do not exist in the Act that necessitates the code's creation.

The third deficiency is that the 1983 Act provides for admission in cases of emergency under which a person can be detained for 72 hours for the purpose of mental assessment. Section 4(2) of the Act states:

"An emergency application may be made either by an approved social worker or by the nearest relative of the patient".

However, the 1989 code greatly weakens the right of the nearest relative to apply for emergency admission by stating, in paragraphs 2.27 and 2.30, that a relative should be informed of his right only "where necessary" or "if necessary".

Sadly, the 1989 code of practice was not withdrawn. Obviously, it was believed at the time that a badly drafted code was better than no code, as it has been six years since Parliament passed the legislation. That was not the first code of practice; years earlier, the Mental Health Act Commission drew up a code that was never officially published because it was completely unacceptable to the mental health professions, principally the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

As an acknowledgment of the 1989 code's deficiencies, the Government agreed that the code's text on the rights of the nearest relative was "very definitely ambiguous" and undertook to make the "proper meaning clear" in an introductory letter to the code. In addition, the Government referred the other two deficiencies to the Mental Health Act Commission. In March 1991, the commission recommended to my hon. Friend's Department that the wording on admission criteria needed amendment, but that the criticism of the wording on patient security was invalid.

My hon. Friend's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) accepted the commission's recommendations for an amendment to the code, which was laid before the House on 28 November last year. Why did not the Department of Health consider the security of a detained patient of paramount importance, both for the patient's own safety and for the safety of others?

Due to the fact that it was an inferior amendment and did not clarify the admission criteria, I prayed in December 1991 that it be withdrawn. Although I withdrew my latter prayer—I assume, and perhaps my hon. friend the Minister will give me confirmation, that the amendment came into force on 13 January this year—I believe to this day that the code of practice inadequately clarifies the powers created by the Act.

Sad to say, my belief in the code's inadequacy has been borne out by the death of my constituent, Miss Helena Thompson. Miss Thompson, who was living with her mother at Darracott road, Boscombe, died of malnutrition in Poole general hospital on the evening of 17 February last year. Before her death, Dorset social services had been aware that her mother, Mrs. Nellie Thompson, suffered from schizophrenia but felt unable to act, as she refused all help.

Over the years the Thompson house fell into a state of disrepair and after Miss Thompson's death it had to be demolished because it was uninhabitable. The chronology of events that led to her death clearly showed the inadequacy of the code of practice. On 16 February last year, having received telephone calls from neighbours who claimed to hear screaming coming from the Thompson house, Dorset police made a forced entry under the Police

*[Mr. Atkinson]*

and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which permits such action when life is believed to be in peril. The police found Miss Thompson bedridden and near death.

The following day Miss Thompson was removed from her home in Darracott road, under the National Assistance Act 1948, by Dorset social services and she died in hospital a few hours later. Under section 135 of the Mental Health Act, Mrs. Thompson, now clinically diagnosed schizophrenic, was compulsorily admitted to hospital for treatment.

I do not seek to place the blame either on Dorset social services or on Dorset police, who I believe acted properly in this tragedy. Indeed, they acted to the best of their ability. Nevertheless, they were acting under their interpretation of the 1983 Act—an interpretation reinforced by the incorrect and ambiguous wording of the code of practice.

I place the blame for my constituent's death squarely on the code of practice, which inadequately clarifies the powers created by the Act and thus misinforms local authorities, which are largely responsible for enforcement of the Act.

The Act permits social services officers to seek compulsory admission based on the three admission criteria, but because the code implies that the three criteria must simultaneously be present, Dorset social services felt that they could not act. The code of practice does not adequately clarify the criteria for compulsory admission, thereby preventing Dorset social services from acting sooner.

Would it not be better for the code to quote the Act's criteria for compulsory admission directly and to state explicity that any one of the three criteria is a sufficient condition for such admission? Furthermore, despite the frail condition of Miss Thompson and the known mental state of her mother, more than 24 hours were required to issue a warrant for the compulsory admission of Mrs. Thompson under section 135.

Finally, the Mental Health Act rightly permits relatives to seek emergency application for compulsory admission. Regrettably, because the code wrongly qualifies that right, Miss Thompson's sister—she is not my constituent—has told me that she was not specifically informed by Dorset social services of her powers to seek an emergency admission for the purpose of assessment because the code does not explicitly state that that power exists under the law. Rather, it relies for clarification on a circular issued by the Department of Health.

Given that a circular does not carry the same weight or importance as the Act's text, would it not be better to amend the code itself?

The untimely and unnecessary death of my constituent, Miss Helena Thompson, has shocked my constituents, who rightly ask why, in this so-called civilised age of the welfare state, the tragedy and the circumstances and events leading up to it could not have been avoided. Had the code of practice issued under the Act properly clarified the rights created in the Act Miss Thompson's death could have been avoided. If the code were properly amended in the way that I have outlined, such tragedies could be prevented in future. I understand that the code is currently the subject of a further review, and I hope that what I have told the House will result in such an amendment.

10.19 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on raising this extremely important subject, and I pay tribute to his interest over the years in the whole issue of schizophrenia. I am grateful for the interest shown by other hon. Members. The attendance for this Adjournment debate seems to be higher than it usually is when I finish the day's proceedings.

Before responding to the particular points that my hon. Friend has raised, I should like to put them in the general context of our approach to the care of mentally ill people in the community. Our policy is that people with a mental illness should have access to all the services that they need, as locally as possible, from long-term in-patient care to domiciliary support for those who can live nearly normal lives outside hospital.

From 1 April last year, all district health authorities were required to initiate, in collaboration with social services departments, explicit individually tailored care programmes for all in-patients about to be discharged from hospitals and for all new patients accepted by the psychiatric services. At the same time, we introduced a new revenue grant to local authorities to encourage them to improve social care and support provision for mentally ill people. This year, the grant has been increased by nearly 50 per cent. to over £31 million, which supports expenditure of over £43 million. To complement this, we authorised additional capital spending of £10 million last year and £10·5 million this year.

The care programme approach and the mental illness specific grant are designed to secure improvements in community services and to ensure that mentally ill people are cared for in the community only if there are adequate health and social services to meet their needs.

My hon. Friend asked about the resources for community care. Standard spending for personal social services this year has been set at £4·85 billion—an increase of 7·7 per cent. in cash terms or 3·1 per cent. in real terms over the previous year, and about 6 per cent. over 1991-92 budgets. Over the past two years, standard spending will have increased by nearly one third, or 19 per cent. in real terms. We estimate that local authorities plan to spend over £5 billion in the current year, which is about £400 million more than they spent last year. We are currently looking at the levels of resources which local authorities will require next year for social services.

This will, of course, be the first year of implementation of our community care policy. We are committed to resourcing the new policy fairly. We will be transferring to local authorities the resources that we would otherwise have provided to finance care through social security payments to people in residential care and nursing homes. We will make that transfer transparent and separately identifiable. I am happy to acknowledge the valuable contribution made by the voluntary sector in the provision of local services for mentally ill people. Voluntary organisations are noted for being user-friendly and for providing flexible services to meet individual needs. Because of their independence from mainstream services and generally closer contact with grass roots opinion, voluntary bodies are often at the forefront of innovation and service development.

In the mental illness field, we are supporting more than 20 voluntary organisations at a total cost of over £2 million. MIND receives £415,000 a year towards its headquarters administrative costs and the National Schizophrenia Fellowship receives £173,000—a core grant of £91,000 plus two project grants. We are also contributing £150,000 over three years towards the running costs of SANE's telephone advice service, the launch of which I attended during my first few weeks at the Department of Health.

The three-year core grants awarded to MIND and NSF in 1990-91 expire on 31 March next year, but these organisations are eligible to apply for renewal of grant aid. I cannot at this stage predict the level of grant that might be applied for or agreed for next year, but I can tell the House that we will give full consideration to the continuing needs of these organisations within the constraints of our grants budget.

I assure my hon. Friend that the Government appreciate the cycle of despair and deprivation which affects homeless mentally ill people. I am glad that my hon. Friend recognises the work done in London during the past couple of years. We have now increased the money to be put into the homeless mentally ill initiative to over £20 million by 1994-95, which will provide for four community psychiatric teams and up to 150 short-term specialist hostel places.

We are not taking the responsibility for providing care for homeless mentally ill people from local health and social services authorities, where it rightly lies, but we recognised that central London had particular problems because of the concentration of people sleeping rough and traditional difficulties in securing inter-agency co-operation in the capital.

At the beginning of last year, we announced a £3 million scheme to stop young people drifting into central London and to develop innovative ways of supporting them in their own communities. We have a further £3 million plan over three years to get doctors out to hostels, night shelters and day centres to make sure that homeless people have the health care to which they are entitled. The rough sleepers initiative by the Department of the Environment to help people sleeping out in London will cost £96 million over three years. The vital role of voluntary agencies in this area is fully recognised, and the Department of the Environment will pay £20 million in grants over the next three years under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985.

The sum of £6·1 million has been allocated in the current financial year, supporting 147 projects around the country, which give practical help to single homeless people. My hon. Friend may know of two projects undertaken by the Bournemouth Churches housing association in south-east Dorset, which are assessing the needs of homeless people in the area, developing a strategy for helping them, and providing resettlement for people at the south-east Dorset night shelter.

The duty to prepare and revise the code of practice is laid on the Secretary of State by section 118 of the Mental Health Act 1983. The code's purposes are defined in that Act as the guidance of doctors, hospital managers and staff, and approved social workers in relation to the admission of patients under the 1983 Act; and the guidance of doctors and members of other professions in relation to the medical treatment of patients suffering from mental disorder.

That makes it clear that the code is intended not just to explain the meaning of the Act but to serve as a guide to good practice generally. Doctors and social workers are expected to have their own first-hand knowledge of the 1983 Act as part of their specialist training. A separate publication, "Memorandum on the Mental Health Act 1983", helps them in that.

In contrast, the code quite properly can and does deal with matters beyond the strict scope of the statutory requirements. It must of course be fully consistent with the letter and the spirit of the 1983 Act, but, as my hon. Friend pointed out, the code cannot create rights or bestow freedoms that are not in the Act itself.

When the present code was introduced in 1990, we announced that we were asking the Mental Health Act Commission to monitor the operation of the code and to propose amendments. Earlier this year, the commission reported on its monitoring and submitted a number of proposed amendments. Generally, the commission reported that the code had been well received by those concerned.

In April, we wrote to all interested bodies to seek their comments on the proposed amendments. The commission told us that it will be submitting further proposals. When they have all been fully considered and consulted on, we shall be laying a revised code, as the 1983 Act requires.

My hon. Friend's first criticism related to the discrepancy between paragraph 2.6 of the code as originally drafted and the wording of the 1983 Act, which allows a patient to be detained

"in the interests of his own health or safety or with a view to the protection of other persons."

As my hon. Friend pointed out, that paragraph has been amended, and I confirm that the amendment came into force on 13 January. That amendment is now part of the code, and carries precisely the same weight as the rest of it.

I am aware that the terms of the amendment attracted some criticism, including, as my hon. Friend said, his own prayer. I am glad to report that the terms of the circular published with the amendment last February were endorsed by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, which issued a press release welcoming it.

My hon. Friend's second criticism was the emphasis, as he referred to it, in paragraphs 18.23 to 18.28 on the patient's

"freedom to dismiss himself from treatment".

We asked the Mental Health Act Commission to consider that passage along with other points that were criticised when the code was introduced. The commission did not agree that the paragraphs in question would necessarily lead to inappropriate laxity in supervising detained patients.

The commission undertook to monitor that part of the code, and in particular to assess the reaction of units to the practicality of the advice it contained. Rather than address the substance of that point, I will say that the proposals for amending those paragraphs are being considered together with the other comments that we receive in the current consultation exercise.

My hon. Friend's third point concerned the right of a patient's nearest relative to make an emergency application for his admission to hospital. We fully agree with my hon. Friend that the words "where necessary" and "if necessary" are misleading. In the circular to which my hon. Friend referred, we say:

*[Mr. Tim Yeo]*

**"The words 'where necessary' in paragraphs 2.27 and 2·30 are ambiguous. They should be interpreted as meaning that where a nearest relative is unaware of his or her rights under the Mental Health Act 1983, then either the approved social worker or the doctor(s) involved in the patient's assessment should positively draw the nearest relative's attention to the existence and substance of these rights."**

I take my hon. Friend's point about the relative weight of the code and the covering circular, but the circular is printed as part of the same volume as the code, and arguably that gives the nearest relative's rights more prominence that they would otherwise have. The circular that we published last February with the amendment to paragraph 2.6 took the opportunity to remind users of the code of their obligations to the nearest relative—so that point was rubbed in yet again.

Even if a code technically outranks a circular, in this instance the circular relies on the 1983 Act, which trumps them both. In any case, I assure my hon. Friend that the offending words "where necessary" and " if necessary" will not appear in the revised edition of the code that will be introduced when we have completed consultation.

As to the very sad case of my hon. Friend's constituent, Miss Helena Thompson, I have carefully considered what he had to say, but I do not believe that the blame for that tragedy can be put entirely at the door of the code of practice. I know that my hon. Friend has received several reports on the case from the director of social services and, from the information I have, it appears that both the social services department and the medical staff concerned discharged their duty in a highly conscientious and professional way.

The case, as my hon. Friend has recounted it, seems to reflect the coincidence of two tragic circumstances. It is the case of a mentally ill mother with a daughter who was bedridden and starving to death in circumstances that remain somewhat mysterious. As far as I can ascertain, the real failing arose not from any misunderstanding about the powers available under the Mental Health Act or other legislation, but simply because Miss Thompson was not known to be in the house and in such a desperate state. When that was discovered, action was taken—as my hon. Friend reported—to remove her to hospital under the National Assistance Act 1948. I must underline that, if her presence had been discovered any earlier, that would not in itself have made any difference to the judgment about whether her mother met the statutory criteria for detention under the Mental Health Act.

There is no question of the social services having been misled by anything in the code of practice about the scope of their powers, or about their obligations to Mrs. Thompson's other daughter. The reason why they could not take action earlier to secure her admission to hospital was that the doctors concerned did not consider that she was suffering from a mental disorder of a nature or degree that warranted her detention under the Act. Therefore, neither an approved social worker nor Mrs. Thompson's nearest relative could have made an application under section 2 or section 3 of the Act.

My hon. Friend mentioned the delay in arranging Mrs. Thompson's eventual admission to hospital. I am satisfied that that was not a result of any doubt about the powers available to the local authority. In fact, it was arranged to remove Mrs. Thompson at a time agreed between all the parties concerned—the consultant psychiatrist, the GP, the approved social worker, the community medical officer, the police and the ambulance service. After they had entered the house under the section 135 powers, Mrs. Thompson was immediately admitted to hospital under section 3 of the Act.

As I have said, we are considering very carefully all the amendments that have been proposed to the code of practice, and will be laying a revised version when the process has been completed. I hope it will be some reassurance to my hon. Friend that I do not believe that the present wording of the code has contributed to the very sad death of his constituent.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 2 July 1992*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL *(By Order)*

*Orders for Second Reading read.*
*To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 July.*

PETERHEAD HARBOURS ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

*Read the Third time, and passed.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Animal Welfare

1. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the welfare of animals transported from the United Kingdom to the rest of the European Community.

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames):** During the United Kingdom presidency of the Community, we will be seeking agreement on further rules to safeguard the welfare of animals during transport. These will apply to all journeys in the Community.

**Mr. Cunningham:** Will the Minister recognise that transporting British calves in veal crates across Europe over many hours, often for the rest of their lives, is an obscene practice? As it was banned in this country two and a half years ago, will he consider welfare labelling so that when animals are recycled and returned to Britain in the form of food, the public will be aware of exactly what they are buying and the cruel practice involved?

**Mr. Soames:** The hon. Gentleman will know that it is a principal aim of the Government during our presidency of the Community to press very hard on all animal welfare issues. Further, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue this case, he should encourage his constituents to buy British veal, which is reared to very high standards and in good welfare conditions.

**Mr. Jessel:** Will my hon. Friend keep up the pressure, because it is monstrous and offensive to British public opinion that hundreds of calves should be cramped and without water on five-hour crossings to Cherbourg and Le Havre and something must be done?

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend will know that very strict rules apply to the welfare of animals in transport. We are expecting new Community rules on 1 January 1993. Until then, the whole Community is to consider further questions on journey times, rest periods, loading densities and vehicle standards. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall bear his views in mind and that we are conscious of the need to ensure that the high standards that apply in this country apply across the Community.

**Mr. Ron Davies:** Hundreds of thousands of animals of all species are transported from these shores in unacceptable conditions and for intolerable distances for slaughter overseas, often in the most appalling circumstances. The Minister is fully aware of the strength of public opinion, and I assure him that we shall give him all the support we can in his endeavours in the European negotiations. However, the single most effective measure would be to limit journey times to eight hours, as is recognised by many welfare bodies outside the Government. Will the Minister give a guarantee now that when the new transport directive is finalised, he personally will insist on a maximum journey time of eight hours?

**Mr. Soames:** The hon. Gentleman rightly raised a very important issue. We are in discussion at the moment, and

a great deal of work is being done on journey times and on other suitable transport arrangements for animals which will be enforceable across the Community. He will know that it would be impossible for us to ban exports of farm animals under article 34 of the treaty of Rome. He should also be aware that this is an important export trade for British farmers, and the reason so many people abroad wish to buy British products is that those goods are produced to such a very high standard.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** Does my hon. Friend agree that border controls throughout Europe are absolutely vital so that checks can be made on animal welfare and when journey times are eventually agreed throughout Europe, they can also be changed?

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend raises an important point. Our aim is to be much tougher than that, and to have checks throughout Europe so that travelling animals may be continually and regularly inspected to ensure that they are transported in proper conditions.

## Redundant Agricultural Workers

2. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to assist agricultural workers who are made redundant; and if he will make a statement.

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry):** Agricultural workers are able to benefit from the same statutory provisions as all other workers.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** Does the Minister accept that as a direct result of decisions taken this week at the Agriculture Ministers Council meeting, significantly more farm and other agricultural workers will lose their jobs? Does he accept that those workers are just as deserving, in their own way, as the miners and steelworkers who received enhanced redundancy packages when their industries were run down? Will he carefully consider the possibility of enhanced redundancy packages for farm workers who can show that they have lost their jobs as a direct result of CAP reform?

**Mr. Curry:** The hon. Gentleman must realise that had it not been for the campaign waged by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food against the MacSharry proposals, many British farmers would have been unable to continue to exist. Those farmers employ many agricultural workers. When the Liberal Democrats discussed the matter, they said that a little bit of nuancing would be enough to satisfy the United Kingdom. I do not think that nuancing would have saved many jobs.

**Mr. John Greenway:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we need a viable and confident agriculture industry to halt the scale of redundancies in the agricultural sector? In order to ensure that there is that viability and confidence, we must end all discriminatory practices. Will my hon. Friend think again about the derogation of slaughterhouse regulations, which is likely to add to the dole queues in the farming industry?

**Mr. Curry:** We are anxious to do all that we can to ensure that the whole food industry, from primary production to the supermarkets, can obtain the maximum added value and the maximum employment. We have an outstanding primary production sector and a significant export trade, and the more that we can do to ensure that they operate on a level playing field, the better that is for employment. We are committed to that.

## Common Agricultural Policy

3. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the details of the CAP reform proposals to be finalised.

**The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer):** The major points were finalised yesterday, and the details will be produced as soon as possible.

**Mr. O'Brien:** Since the Minister has been in his post, 25 farm workers and 14 farmers have lost their jobs each day. How much will those daily figures increase as a result of the new common agricultural policy, and what does the Minister propose to do to reduce them?

**Mr. Gummer:** The hon. Gentleman should examine the figures, which show that the reduction in the numbers of farmers and farm workers have been pretty constant over the past 150 years. That is a fact of life, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will realise that as time goes on. The reform has meant that the European Community is meeting exactly the terms that we wanted, and we can now look forward to a secure future within the common agricultural policy, which will properly defend our extremely good farming, which produces jobs for farmers and farm workers.

**Mr. Colin Shepherd:** Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the Government's view on the pension provisions for the early retirement of elderly farmers in the United Kingdom, as well as in the Community, bearing in mind that it is important to introduce new young blood to accommodate the changes in agricultural practices?

**Mr. Gummer:** I am not sure whether the Community's proposals could be used for the purpose that my hon. Friend has in mind. We were determined that there should be a link with the restructuring of very small farms, so that they could provide a viable future for new blood. I do not believe that the same conditions exist in this country—although I should be happy to consider any specific proposal from my hon. Friend. The restructuring proposal was intended especially for countries with very small farms.

**Dr. David Clark:** The Minister has just said that the CAP reforms were on the terms that we wanted. Is he aware of the following intervention by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) in the House on Monday:

"the Court of Auditors described the recent MacSharry proposals accepted by the Agricultural Ministers as 'a recipe for fraud' "—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 586.]

What does the Minister intend to do about that?

**Mr. Gummer:** We have always put the combating of fraud at the top of our priorities. We shall ensure that everything is done to see that the system is transparent and properly carried through. What I said about CAP reform stands. We wanted to make sure that it was fair to all farmers, but did not discriminate against British farmers

—that it was a system that directed the money to farmers rather than at supporting prices. We have achieved all those objectives and we have done so with no help whatsoever from the hon. Gentleman.

## Food Safety Act 1990

4. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implementation of the Food Safety Act 1990.

**Mr. Soames:** The public demanded the Food Safety Act 1990. As a result, they are now better protected than in any other country in Europe. If they want the safest food, they should buy British.

**Mr. Coombs:** Although I recognise that the 1990 Act was a most important milestone, does my hon. Friend agree that the importance of training and education about food hygiene cannot be over-emphasised? What action does he propose to take to ensure that the highest standards in that education and training are maintained?

**Mr. Soames:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising an important point relating to the Act. The Government are committed to the introduction of food hygiene training, which has an important part to play in raising standards in some parts of the food industry and raising the morale and motivation of staff. Of course, we must take the EC draft directive into account. Nevertheless, I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health hopes to make an annoucement soon. I hope that that will please my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Pike:** Does the Minister appreciate that local authorities have tremendous responsibilities under the Act to carry out the provisions of that legislation? They are concerned because of the delay in publishing the regulations and about the lack of consultation. Does the Minister appreciate that local authorities are also concerned because the £30 million that was to be available to them to finance the introduction of their responsibilities under the Act was not ring-fenced? Because of that and the fact that local government spending in general has been squeezed because sufficient moneys have not been provided, that money is not available to local authorities to carry out their responsibilities under the Act.

**Mr. Soames:** The hon. Gentleman is overdoing it a bit. If local authorities have spent that money on something else, that is thoroughly reprehensible. It is true that we have taken a good deal of time to bring the proposals forward, but that is because we want them to be workable, efficient and effective. We want them to have the broadest effect throughout the industry. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall lay them before the House as soon as they are ready.

**Mr. Fry:** Bearing in mind the need for the utmost food safety and hygiene, is my hon. Friend aware that over-zealous local authority employees are preventing the provision of food in many church halls and village halls? That food has been served for many years without any evidence of illness and such prevention will cause concern, particularly to those who are able to buy food at a cheaper rate because it is provided by a charity. Surely we should reach a balance. We should not destroy the valuable service which many voluntary workers have given for many years.

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend is correct. We have issued forceful guidelines to ensure that events such as church fetes and other charitable functions, which have always met the highest standards of food hygiene and for which voluntary workers go to a great deal of trouble to prepare food for other people, are considered low-risk events in food safety terms. Local authorities have far higher priority areas at which to target their resources. I assure my hon. Friend that we watch this matter carefully. Some of the reports have been exaggerated, but some are true and we shall keep a careful eye on the matter.

## Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

5. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the number of reported cases of BSE for the past 12 months.

**Mr. Soames:** The number of cases of BSE reported in Great Britain in the 12 months to 20 June 1992 was 38,654.

**Mr. Banks:** The House will be reassured to know that, so far, grouse are not affected by BSE, so the Minister can continue to eat his favourite breakfast. The figures that he announced are extremely dramatic. Is it not a fact that, since 1988, there has been an alarming increase in the number of reported cases of BSE and that nearly 800 confirmed new cases a week are recorded? It might be okay for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to force-feed his children with hamburgers, but would it not be advisable for pet owners not to feed their animals any beef products? In view of the alarming figures that the Minister announced, is it not now time to have another new, public, independent inquiry to discover whether there is any threat to public health?

**Mr. Soames:** The hon. Gentleman will know that we already have an independent committee. However, earlier, the Southwood working party estimated that there would be about 300 to 400 cases a month. The Southwood figure was heavily qualified and made it clear that no account had been taken of any recycling of the infective agent through feed derived from cattle. The figure quoted by the hon. Gentleman has been widely misunderstood. It actually reflects the increased administrative effort to ensure that our data base is up to date. In fact, we are seeing on average about 700 suspect cases a week, not all of which will be confirmed. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that those figures are fully consistent with our expectations that, thanks to the bans, the disease will disappear in the years to come.

**Mr. Knapman:** Bearing in mind that the very long incubation period makes it difficult to forecast the progress of the disease, is it not excellent news that the present situation is as forecast by the Southwood and Tyrrell reports? What particular help will the scaremongering debate on an Opposition day on Monday have in respect of the food and farming industries?

**Mr. Soames:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Many of us believe that the scares are a scare too far. The Government's response has been vigorous and effective. It has been widely endorsed, most recently by the OIE—the

intergovernmental veterinary body. We have made unparalleled efforts to convince other countries that they can safely continue to import British products. Above all, we have been fully open with information about the disease and have placed total reliance on independent scientific advice.

## International Whaling Commission

6. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the International Whaling Commission's meeting in Glasgow.

**Mr. Gummer:** The meeting has yet to conclude. There is encouraging progress on a number of key points, although there are also the very grave difficulties of the attitudes of the Norwegians and Icelanders.

**Mr. Morgan:** The moral persuasion at the Minister's command to try to persuade the otherwise very civilised country of Norway away from recidivism and the barbarities of whale hunting would be redoubled, if only he would join Opposition Members in asking for a statutory ban on fox hunting, as the Norwegian Government have already pointed out. Does the Minister therefore agree that if he is to return to Glasgow and make greater efforts to dissuade the Norwegians, there might be some chance that he could stop the very civilised whale hunting ban coming to an end with more of a wimp than a banger?

**Mr. Gummer:** The hon. Gentleman does his case no good. We are talking about an international stock dealt with under an international commission. The Norwegian Prime Minister, Mrs. Brundtland, who is responsible for a report on this subject, stated in her introduction:

> "Perhaps our most urgent task today is to persuade nations of the need to return to multi-lateralism . . . These challenges cut across the divides of national sovereignty, of limited strategies for economic gain and of separated disciplines of science."

I believe that Mrs. Brundtland has become the only environmentalist with a pen in one hand and an explosive harpoon in the other.

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that I have received more letters from my constituents on that issue than about any other? They are deeply concerned about what is happening in Glasgow at the moment, particularly with the announcement that two other countries may end the moratorium on whale hunting. I pass on the good wishes of my constituents to my right hon. Friend as he tries to persuade those countries at the conference not to end the moratorium. If those two countries decide to try to go it alone, what action can my right hon. Friend take?

**Mr. Gummer:** It is necessary to bring home to people that this is not an issue which can be decided unilaterally. There is an International Whaling Commission, and that commission regulates the way in which we deal with whales and cetaceans generally. Opposition Members do not do much good to their cause by trying to make the issue a means of promoting some other matter about which they happen to feel strongly. The issue is based on an international agreement which was solemnly signed by the Norwegians and to which they should keep. If they wish to lecture other people about how to run their lives, they should remember to keep their international obligations as well.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** Is my right hon. Friend aware of lobbying by the Japanese Government and others behind the scenes to try to ensure that the French proposal for a sanctuary for whales was not accepted at the conference? Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will do everything that he can and that the British Government will join the French Government in trying to ensure that all the necessary background work is done to make sure that that sanctuary proposal is accepted?

**Mr. Gummer:** I hope very much that, towards the end of this afternoon, with very considerable support and pressure from the British Government, there will be a majority vote in favour of work being done on that sanctuary proposal, on the scientific background material being produced and on a proposal that could be brought back at the next IWC conference, which is what we intended in the first place. The French said that the proposal is not yet ready for decision, although we have said that we are looking at it in the most favourable way and will do our best to promote it.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out that the majority of whales are not in British waters and that therefore there must be an international agreement. Will he explain what the French announced yesterday, because their point of view within the International Whaling Commission was not clear?

**Mr. Gummer:** I do not think that it was unclear; it had been reported in a curious manner. The French said that they accepted that the details of the proposal were not yet ready. Indeed, I said in my answer on the press comments that the proposal was not yet ready in detail for presentation and for voting this year and that, if we were to set up the scientific apparatus and the rest of the things with which we in Britain have promised to help, it might be—I very much hope that it will be—ready for agreement next year.

Of course, in the meantime, the moratorium must continue. There must be no question of allowing whaling to restart. Countries that believe that they have a divine right to decide their own whaling must remember their international obligations, particularly those which tell other people how to run their lives. They should remember that they should take the international case on their own doorstep.

**Dr. David Clark:** Does the Minister appreciate that he would take the good will of the whole House with him if he would see the Prime Minister and urge upon him the importance of his impressing upon the Japanese Prime Minister, when he meets him on Saturday, that the British people and Parliament would take a very dim view if the Japanese broke the moratorium on whaling?

**Mr. Gummer:** I assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will bring very clearly to the Japanese Prime Minister the feelings of people in this country. The whale is an extremely advanced animal. It cannot be taken except in circumstances in which we are assured of the three pre-conditions. Those pre-conditions have not begun to be met. Therefore, there can be no question of raising that moratorium. The Japanese should

be in no doubt whatsoever that civilised countries do not break international agreements, particularly when they are very keen on reminding other people that they should not break them.

## Sugar

7. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what particular factors the Minister will take into account when renegotiating the EC sugar regime.

**Mr. Curry:** We want a thorough review which takes proper account of our beet and cane interests and brings benefit to sugar users.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** My hon. Friend will be aware that sugar production is an extremely important sector of the United Kingdom farming industry. The present United Kingdom quota system is a long way short of consumption levels. In the circumstances, would it not be intolerable, when reforming the EC sugar regime, if that quota were to be reduced still further?

**Mr. Curry:** I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that the United Kingdom has obligations to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and it intends to honour those obligations. Therefore, half of our consumption comes from cane sugar. However, it is true that the United Kingdom produces a lot less of our requirements than other countries produce, and if we have to see a reform of the sugar regime which involves cutting quotas, it would be appropriate for the United Kingdom relatively to do better than other countries in that process.

**Mr. Tyler:** Does the Minister agree that in the sugar beet sector, as in others, the proposed changes in inheritance tax, which have been discussed in Standing Committee, are likely to have some contradictory effects? I welcome the changes in inheritance tax because the industry obviously needs them, but does the Minister agree that over a range of agricultural changes introduced as a result of the common agricultural policy, it will be necessary to avoid preventing the achievement of major environmental access and recreational agreements? The good work that the Minister has done in the past could be undone. Does the Minister agree that some steps will have to be taken to mitigate those effects?

**Mr. Curry:** We shall have to examine the practical consequences to which the hon. Gentleman refers. We are committed to maintaining and improving access. If they are sensible, farmers are also committed to obtaining greater benefits from giving access and to using the environment as an asset of mutual benefit to everyone. We shall certainly pursue those proposals and ideas.

**Mr. Alexander:** Will my hon. Friend take into account that some EC countries such as flavour-of-the-month Denmark have quotas that are twice their consumption while Britain has a quota which is half its consumption? Will he bear in mind that Britain therefore contributes nothing to the overall surplus and that the surplus comes from the rest of the EC countries?

**Mr. Curry:** That is why in any reform that entails cutting quotas, it will be fair for other countries to take the lion's share of the cuts. We must also ensure that the reform addresses price. Otherwise there will be a serious imbalance between the sugar sector and other parts of the arable sectors.

## Animal Welfare

9. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many letters he has received about animal welfare, and especially on whaling, in the last 12 months; and how many officials are involved in reading the correspondence and dealing with advice and information on the Government position.

**Mr. Gummer:** More than 60,000 letters and cards about animal welfare have been received in the past 12 months, of which more than 38,000 were on whaling. Up to 36 officials have been involved in dealing with this correspondence.

**Mr. Steen:** As my right hon. Friend's robust and consistent opposition to whaling both in the House and throughout the country, has been well known for a long time, does he agree that it would be far better if the many thousands of people who write to him at a cost to the taxpayer, should direct their attention to the ambassadors of Norway, Iceland and other countries, let my right hon. Friend get on with his job and allow his officials to spend their time doing the things that they should be doing? Will he make a statement this afternoon saying that people throughout the country should direct their attention elsewhere?

**Mr. Gummer:** I am sure that it would help if those who are considering beginning to whale again received large numbers of letters. Not only should ambassadors receive letters but it might be better to direct letters to the Prime Ministers who make the decisions so that they know precisely what it means to say that when a country decides that it can tell the Pope how to run religion and Brazil how to look after its rain forests, it should not refuse to tell its own whalers not to whale.

**Mr. Morley:** Does the Minister accept that many people write because they are worried about the undoubted cruelty involved in whaling? The Minister rightly pointed that out at the Glasgow conference. Does he also accept that the people of Britain are worried about all forms of cruelty to animals? The position of the country and the Government would be a great deal stronger with the Norwegians if the Minister joined others in promoting a protection of wild mammals Bill to stop the undoubtedly and equally cruel practice of inflicting dogs on wild animals.

**Mr. Gummer:** I read the hon. Gentleman's letter in today's *The Independent*. He repeats the basic argument of the Norwegian whalers and therefore supports them. He is doing harm to our case because he fails to distinguish the fundamental issue which is that an international body deals with an international activity affecting animals in international waters. That body has made clear the rules under which we operate. The Norwegians belong to that body, as did the Icelanders. They ought to obey the body to which they belong.

## Agricultural Support

10. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the total public expenditure on support for United Kingdom farmers *(a)* from the Exchequer, *(b)* individually via the European Community and *(c)* in total.

**Mr. Gummer:** Details of public expenditure on agriculture are given in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1991" in table 9.1.

**Mr. Moate:** Would it surprise my right hon. Friend to know that in 1991-92 the British taxpayer spent £4,120 million on agricultural support, which would be enough for my right hon. Friend to send a cheque for about £17,095·35 to every one of the 241,000 farms—small and large—in this country? As British farmers are clearly not receiving that level of benefit and, even after the changes to it, the common agricultural policy will not give good value for money to taxpayers, consumers or farmers and will not benefit the countryside, what further CAP reforms will my right hon. Friend press for?

**Mr. Gummer:** My hon. Friend has never been a great enthusiast of the European Community or the common agricultural policy, and he might well have asked that question using different figures at any time during the past 10 years. There has been a major reform and we are able to support the production of food and care for the countryside, which is the farmers' duty. That system is right for the whole of Europe. I believe that our environmental heritage is not limited to the United Kingdom; I want it to prevail in Europe. I am sure that my hon. Friend's children, and my own, will benefit from a system that ensures that we look after the countryside, from Scotland to Sicily.

**Mr. Dafis:** Does the Minister recognise the need for a comprehensive strategy to enable young people to enter farming, including the possibility of low interest loans and start-up grants, perhaps based on the French model? Does he also recognise the need for measures to control or limit the fragmentation and amalgamation of farms? Does he recognise that there would be a broad welcome for such measures in rural communities, specifically in rural Wales?

**Mr. Gummer:** I am sure that people in rural Wales will be pleased that we have been able to prevent the discrimination against them that would have occurred under the MacSharry plan, and which would have placed them in a worse position than the people of rural Ireland. The basis of our reform is exactly as the hon. Gentleman would want it. I wonder whether he would want the low rate of interest loans that the French have if, at the same time, he was subject to the French inheritance laws under which the French have to pay back large sums of money to every other member of the family when they inherit a farm. That is one of the reasons for their low interest rates, and the hon. Gentleman would have to accept both features. I do not think that his proposals would be sensible for rural Wales or for the rest of the country.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Should we not add to the huge direct subsidy that farmers receive the massive extra burden borne by consumers to protect farmers from foreign produce? At a time when many members of the farming lobby in Britain are complaining about the possibility of job losses as a result of the reform of the common agricultural policy, should we not remind them of the huge number of jobs lost in Europe over the past 40 years as a result of the artificial diversion of huge sums of money into the agricultural industry? That money could have been more efficiently deployed in other industries, thus creating more jobs in them.

**Mr. Gummer:** I deeply disagree with my hon. Friend. If we had carried out his proposals, countries such as the United States, which heavily subsidise farmers, would have been able to take over the whole of our agricultural industry and we would find it impossible to produce our own food or look after our countryside. There will always be a need for proper support for agriculture in a country like ours, as in the rest of Europe, as we place upon farmers environmental responsibilities which they cannot afford from their returns from the market. We need to strike a proper balance, which we will come closer to achieving through CAP reform. That is the beginning of what will be the continuing business of adapting our system to the realities of life, not to some theoretical free market that does not exist in the world in which most farmers are supported.

**Mr. Skinner:** Is the Minister aware that in Bolsover, where every family has to pay more than £18 a week to bail out rich farmers because of the common agricultural policy, people are saying that it is high time that this wart of a Minister got something done about the dioxin in the area? Is he also aware that last week it was announced that one family was found to have up to six times more than the normal level of dioxin in their blood? On top of that, he is refusing to pay farmers compensation. Why does he not have a public inquiry, settle the matter and ensure that the people of Bolsover are able to lay their complaints at the door where they really belong—the Government and this little squirt of a Minister.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am sure that the hon. Member will regret——

**Mr. Skinner:** I meant every word.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am asking—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am asking the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that remark.

**Mr. Skinner:** I will not.

**Madam Speaker:** I am asking the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* Order. I also ask the House to leave this matter to me. I ask the hon. Member for Bolsover if he will withdraw the word that he has just used.

**Mr. Skinner:** I know "Erskine May" a little. I know that that word is not in it. I know that not long ago my right hon. Friend referred to a Tory as a jerk. I am not prepared to withdraw because that is how I picture the Minister.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am very reluctant to use the authority that the House has given me and I again ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his remark—*[Interruption.]* Order. I am well aware that the remark that he made is not in "Erskine May" but there are some phrases and a vocabulary that should not be used in the House. Once again, I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the remark that he made.

**Mr. Skinner:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I am most reluctant to use my disciplinary powers. Will the hon. Member for Bolsover withdraw that remark?

**Mr. Skinner:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** That being the case I have no alternative but to ask the hon. Member for Bolsover to withdraw from the House for this days's sitting.

*The hon. Member then withdrew from the House.*

### Food Labelling

12. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to improve the labelling of food.

**Mr. Soames:** There are proposals for food labelling before the Council of Ministers, covering a variety of matters. We expect further proposals from the Commission on statements claiming that food stuffs have particular properties. I expect to announce shortly my decisions on the recommendations of the Food Advisory Committee's review of food labelling in the United Kingdom—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Would the House calm down so that we can get on with our proceedings.

**Mr. Devlin:** May I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, especially after the removal of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Surely my hon. Friend would agree that it is of the utmost importance to the consumer that food is always kept in its best possible condition. Therefore, it should always be clearly marked with the date on which its shelf life expires and the date on which it should cease being used by the housewife. That is the best protection to ensure that the fine food produced by our farmers is delivered in the same quality to housewives in their homes.

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government are committed to going further down the road of ensuring the provision of more informative labelling. Most pre-packed foods are now marked with the "best before" date. It is our intention to keep this matter under review. There are, of course, microbiologically highly perishable foods which are likely, after a short period, to pose immediate danger to human health. These foods must carry a "use by" date.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** Does the Minister agree that if the food labelling regulations required disclosure that the animal had been killed in a small butcher-owned abattoir, that would be likely to increase the sales of the meat? Will he look once again at the pettifogging requirements which are putting small butcher-owned abattoirs here out of business while other countries, such as Greece, are not adopting the same standards?

**Mr. Soames:** The hon. and learned Gentleman is quite right. This is a matter of great concern to the Government. We have secured a derogation on smaller units and we intend to see a level playing field throughout the European Community in this as in all other matters of European legislation.

## PRIME MINISTER

### CSCE

Q1. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the forthcoming Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe summit in Helsinki.

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** The CSCE sets standards of democratic behaviour for the 52 countries of Europe and North America that belong to it. Britain wants it to play a more prominent role in peacekeeping, with the help of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Western European Union, in bringing pressure to bear on members who fail to meet democratic standards, in providing early warning of disputes between its members and in the conciliation and arbitration of disputes. We have put forward proposals in all these areas for decision at the summit.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the continuing ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union are in total contradiction of the Paris charter, signed at the last CSCE summit in November 1990? What new measures will he be supporting; or indeed proposing, at next week's CSCE summit in Helsinki which will bring such wars in Europe to an end and avoid any new ones in the future?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is quite right in his strictures about present performance. The CSCE can press the parties involved both to negotiate in good faith and to settle their differences peacefully. The proposals that we have put forward for the summit are aimed at making the conference more effective in both these areas.

**Dr. Godman:** The CSCE should surely be discussing, among other things, the eventual replacement of NATO by a European defence organisation. Does the Prime Minister agree that NATO is coming to the end of its days and that what is needed is a European defence organisation that is not dominated by American political and military leaders?

**The Prime Minister:** No, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman about that. I believe that NATO's contribution in the period since the war has helped to keep Europe safe. I believe that it will continue to be the best guarantor of our security in the future. Although we see a growing role for the Western European Union, it can have that only as the European arm of NATO, with the Europeans paying a proportionately greater share of the defence of Europe. NATO must remain. It is our security both in Europe and beyond.

### Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Gallie:** Has my right hon. Friend seen the reports that show how dramatically the living standards of the British people have risen over the last 20 years—all the

British people? Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that there is no coincidence other than the fact that we have had 15 years of Conservative government?

**The Prime Minister:** I have seen the headline about that particular report, though I confess that I have not yet read every detail of the report. There is no doubt that the living standards of people right across the nation have soared dramatically in recent years. Although some hon. Members below the Gangway may scoff, it is the fact that they are that out of touch which helped them lose the last election.

**Mr. Kinnock:** Would the Prime Minister be satisfied if his children's schools were to be inspected by anyone who had nothing more than a few days' training for the task?

**The Prime Minister:** There is a strong case for independent inspection of schools by lay people of experience in life. That is the right way to proceed and it is what we will do.

**Mr. Kinnock:** If those lay people, who are supposed to be independent despite the fact that they are freelance contractors, were to report that a primary school was not coming up to standard because there were more than 30 children in its classes, would the Government then provide more resources to ensure that there were more teachers in order to bring those class sizes down?

**The Prime Minister:** There has been a reduction in class sizes, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. He also knows that independent inspectors will be registered by Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools. We have made it perfectly clear in the parents charter that there will be regular reports on schools by independent inspectors. That is now a matter of law. It was put on the statute book by the Education (Schools) Act 1992.

**Mr. Kinnock:** It is a pity that the Prime Minister did not respond to the question of what he will do to improve the quality of education if those inspectors report—when they report—that standards are deficient because of a shortage of teachers. More than 1 million British school children in primary schools are in classes of more than 30 and, contrary to what the right hon. Gentleman says, the number is increasing. When will he start paying attention to the real problems of education and acknowledge that the privatisation of the inspectorate has nothing to do with overcoming those deep-seated problems?

**The Prime Minister:** We have a wide range of education policies to improve the quality of education in schools. One part of that, to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, is the independent inspection of schools. We believe that independent inspection by people not related to the education profession is a better way of ensuring that we have reports that are fully independent and which reflect more accurately those things that parents wish to learn about the schools at which their children are educated.

Q3. **Mr. French:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. French:** Has my right hon. Friend seen the remarks by Mr. De Gruchy, the general secretary of the National Association of Headmasters——

**Hon. Members:** "Schoolmasters".

**Madam Speaker:** Order. We are all allowed a slip of the tongue sometimes.

**Mr. French:** It is the same Mr. De Gruchy who said recently that spelling does not matter very much. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is just another example —*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. This is all taking up time.

**Mr. French:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is just another example of the education establishment's trendy attitude which bears no relationship at all to the needs of pupils and parents or to the views of those teachers who do worry about standards in schools?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that my hon. Friend is right to say that the majority of the British people want the basics of education taught, and taught from the earliest days in school. That self-evidently means reading, writing and adding up. My hon. Friend's comments will be echoed by parents throughout the country.

Q4. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Ashton:** Will the Prime Minister find time today to consider the circumstances surrounding the case of Mr. Roy Cornes, a Birmingham factory worker, who knowingly infected four women with the AIDS virus, one of whom has since died? Is he aware that that is a severe criminal offence in America and France, yet the Secretary of State for Health refuses to introduce legislation, saying that the existing laws are adequate? If that is the case, why have there been no prosecution?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not want to refer to the case that the hon. Gentleman cites. I do not know what will happen in that particular instance, but it would be unwise for me to interfere. The underlying problem of HIV notification is that of driving it further underground and thereby creating a further health hazard. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that genuine dilemma. However, no one will push to one side without concern the problem that he raises.

**Mrs. Browning:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the works of Shakespeare have a central place in the teaching of English in our schools? Is he not appalled at the negative view taken by the National Union of Teachers, which describes Shakespeare as boring and irrelevant? Is that not another example of how out of touch the NUT is with teachers, parents and the needs of pupils?

**The Prime Minister:** Many people would agree with my hon. Friend that Shakespeare's works should be an important part of the school curriculum. "Much Ado About Nothing" is something with which the House is often familiar—*[Interruption.]* In my defence, Madam Speaker, I will say only that "NUT or not NUT", which I heard uttered by a member of the Opposition Front Bench, was even less amusing.

Q5. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Ross:** Given that a few months ago the Prime Minister and his party were campaigning on the strategy that, despite recent increases in unemployment, more people were in work, how does he answer the report published by my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), which clearly demonstrates that the employed labour force fell by 191,000 in 1991, and that by April this year another 94,000 were added to that total? When will the Prime Minister start to deal with this country's massive unemployment?

**The Prime Minister:** No one takes the unemployment situation lightly. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that that is the case. The advice that I received when I read an article about that report this morning was that the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) had taken some liberties with the figures—including ignoring people who are at work on Government programmes.

**Mr. Pickles:** Will my right hon. Friend have time today to reflect on the recent statements by Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, regarding the impending privatisation of the coal industry? Does not my right hon. Friend deprecate Mr. Scargill's attempts to revive the damaging strike of the early 1980s? Will he give an assurance that the Government will not in any way be deflected from privatising coal, which will be in the interests of the industry and its workers?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. We want a modern and efficient coal industry that offers its employees a chance to share in the future. Mr. Scargill and his friends do not realise that privatisation is in the best interests of the industry and of those who work in it. As Labour has over the years closed more coal mines than we ever have, it should realise that.

Q6. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 2 July.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Pendry:** When the Prime Minister stated recently that he wants a green theme to develop during Britain's presidency of the EEC, was he aware that the Treasury is planning to abolish the Advisory Committee on International Green Policy and to cut by half the Joint Nature Conservation Committee's senior staff? Will the Prime Minister tell the House what he will do to those Treasury mandarins who seem hell-bent, so early in the right hon. Gentleman's presidency, on cutting him off and making him appear to be a Johnny-come-lately?

**The Prime Minister:** Environmental matters spread across all policies and do not relate just to the appointment of particular bodies. We have already made it clear that throughout our presidency of the Community and in our domestic policies we will take environmental improvement very seriously. It will be considered in all the policies that we put forward.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on his achievement yesterday in terms of all-party talks on constitutional matters? Does my right hon. Friend share my view that the brutal murders in south Armagh overnight underline the need for peaceful progress and for the involvement of all lawful political parties joining together for the defeat of terrorism?

**The Prime Minister:** I believe that my hon. Friend, in his last remark, will carry the whole House with him. The discovery of the three bodies in Armagh last night, and the subsequent admission by the Provisional IRA that it is responsible, demonstrates yet again the true nature of terrorism. The historic agreement of the Northern Ireland parties yesterday to start strands 2 and 3 of the talks deserves unreserved welcome, and I certainly join in the congratulations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and his colleagues. I hope that we shall see the strand 2 meetings convened under Sir Ninian Stephen, and that the first meeting will take place as soon as possible. Although it would be premature to make predictions about the eventual outcome, the way is now open for the Northern Ireland parties to explore new relationships face to face with the Irish Government, and that is a great step forward.

## Business of the House

3.30 pm

**Mr. Bruce Grocott** (The Wrekin): Will the Leader of the House please state the business for next week?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 6 JULY—Opposition day (3rd allotted day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate described as "The Recession in Industry", followed by a debate described as "The Government's Failure to Contain Bovine Spongiforrm Encephalopathy". Both debates arise on Opposition motions.

Motion on the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (Contracted Out Prisons) Order.

Motion on the Parole Board (Transfer of Functions) Order.

TUESDAY 7 JULY—Progress on remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

At Ten O'clock the Question will be put on the supplementary estimates 1992-93.

Motion on the Value Added Tax (Payments on Account) Order.

WEDNESDAY 8 JULY—Completion of remaining stages of the Finance Bill.

Motions on the House of Commons Members Fund.

THURSDAY 9 JULY—Motion on the summer Adjournment.

Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill.

FRIDAY 10 JULY—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 13 JULY—Debate on the report from the Select Committee on Sittings of the House on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion relating to the nominations of departmental Select Committees.

The House will wish to know also that European Standing Committees will meet on Wednesday 8 July at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

Committee A—Document 5185/91 relating to bird conservation;

Committee B—Document 6831/92 relating to the extractive industries, mines and quarries.

European Standing Committee A will also meet on Thursday 9 July at 10.30 am to consider European Community document 6414/92 relating to the identification and registration of animals.

*[Wednesday 8 July:*
*European Standing Committee A*
*Relevant European Community Document*
*5185/91 Bird Conservation*
*Relevant Reports of the European Legislation Committee HC 29-xvii (1990-91), HC 29-xxvii (1990-91) and HC 24-xv (1991-92)*
*European Standing Committee B*
*Relevant European Community Document*
*6831/92 Health and Safety in mines and quarries*
*Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee HC 79-i (1992-93)*
*Thursday 9 July:*
*European Standing Committee A*
*Relevant European Community Document*
*6414/92 Identification and Registration of Animals*
*Relevant Report of the European Legislation Committee HC 79-i (1992-93)]*

**Mr. Grocott:** I welcome the promise of a debate, on Monday week, on the report of the Select Committee on the Sittings of the House. I should like to know, however, when the House will make some decisions on this matter. As I understand the situation, the debate will be one without any conclusion. May we be provided with an opportunity to make some clear decisions so that we can have a more sensible way of working?

We recognise the Government's problem in trying to fill parliamentary time since the withdrawal of the European Communties (Amendment) Bill—Maastricht Bill? I should like to make two helpful suggestions. First, is it not high time, in the first full week of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Council of Ministers, that we had in debate, in Government time, on unemployment—not least in view of the Prime Minister's totally unsatisfactory reply today? We want the Secretary of State for Employment to come to the House to explain why our unemployment record is so much worse than those of all our European competitors, and why the Government seem to think that workers in Britain need to work longer hours and with fewer holidays than our counterparts in other European countries.

Finally, may I ask the Leader of the House for another visit from a Secretary of State? I feel that the Secretary of State for National Heritage should visit the House next week, so that we can have either a statement or a debate about broadcasting. Today, many of our constituents—particularly those who are infirm or elderly—have an opportunity to watch both Wimbledon and the test match live on television, but if the Government persist in their current policy of allowing programmes to go over to Sky television, this could be the last year in which they can watch live sport. Is it not high time that the Secretary of State for National Heritage explained to the House why the Government are restricting freedom of choice for our constituents?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman has asked a good many questions.

I hope that the debate on what I will describe in shorthand as the Jopling report, which will take place on Monday 13 July, will pave the way for the House to reach some decisions very soon after it returns in the autumn. The hon. Gentleman also suggested that employment was a particularly important subject for debate in this first week of the British presidency. I consider it more important to debate our objectives for the presidency as a whole, and that is the subject of the debate that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will launch after Business Questions. Moreover, the Opposition will have their own debate on a motion that they have described as "The Recession in Industry", which will take place on Monday. No doubt that will enable hon. Members to make some observations along the lines suggested by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott).

I shall not have to drag my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage to the House during the period covered by my statement, to satisfy the hon. Gentleman's request. My right hon. and learned Friend is due to answer questions on Monday 13 July.

**Mr. Nicholas Budgen** (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the idea of the sovereignty of Parliament rests, at least in part, on the conventions and procedures of the House, which protect minority views and interests? If the European Communities (Amendment) Bill is bashed through in a fortnight's marathon, as was suggested by informed sources in *The Sunday Times* last week, the whole idea of the sovereignty of Parliament will be damaged and the case for a referendum will become stronger.

**Mr. Newton:** I see no real basis for the suggestion that the Government's handling of the Maastricht Bill, both before and since the Danish referendum, gives anyone reason to suppose that we are not taking proper account of the position of Parliament and the desire of Members of Parliament—including my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—to make their views clear. As my hon. Friend will know, I have in any case undertaken to arrange a further debate before the Bill proceeds.

**Mr. Archy Kirkwood** (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that, unless the position improves in France—where the road blockade is causing substantial dislocation—there will be time for the Government to make a statement next week? The piracy on the roads is not only causing dislocation and disruption to tourists; loads of perishable goods are going to wrack and ruin as a result of the French farmers' activities.

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot promise a statement next week. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, however, that next Thursday's business in particular—the summer Adjournment and Consolidated Fund debates—will provide him with substantial opportunities to raise such matters, if he feels sufficiently assiduous.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. Friend has announced that the European Standing Committees will sit next week. Will he ensure, however, that the precedent set by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is not followed in future? The first two attended a meeting of the Council of Ministers, and did not report back to the House on important policy matters; my right hon. Friend the Chancellor acceded to a directive calling for an amended VAT rate of 15 per cent. for four years.

**Mr. Newton:** May I gently observe to my hon. Friend, who I know has a considerable interest in all these matters, that no agreement was reached at the Economic and Finance Council this week on the directive that he seems principally to have in mind, so I am not sure that his suggestion that my right hon. Friend has in some way failed the House is justified.

**Mr. Dennis Turner** (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the Leader of the House invite the President of the Board of Trade to come to the House and tell us about the findings of the Director General of Fair Trading in his interim report on the beer orders? The brewing industry is in chaos. The problems over competition and consumer choice have led to disarray in the beer industry. When people want to buy a pint of beer during their summer holidays, what price will they have to pay for it and what sort of competition——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that he should not put questions like that to the Leader of the House. It may be an important subject, but it does not need to be argued at this stage.

**Mr. Turner:** Then I would ask the Leader of the House to oblige us by inviting the President of the Board of Trade to come here and tell us the outcome of those deliberations.

**Mr. Newton:** I undertake to pass on the invitation extended by the hon. Gentleman, but I am not sure that I shall initial it.

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on getting the departmental Select Committees under way. I know that he has booked time for motions on the membership of the Committees on Monday week. Bearing in mind that the Committee of Selection is to meet next Wednesday, would it not be possible to deal with the matter towards the end of next week and thus provide a little more time for the Committees to get under way? Will my right hon. Friend look again at that matter?

**Mr. Newton:** I have given some consideration to it. My right hon. Friend has kindly recognised that, given that the Committee of Selection was unable to come forward with names yesterday, it cannot now do so before next Wednesday. Difficulty arises from the fact that the proposal needs to be on the Order Paper for two days. If there were any way of speeding it up, I should be happy to look at it, but I am not sure that there is. What I have done is make sure that it can be dealt with as soon as possible.

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): Could we have a statement next week to clarify whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer has handed over tax-raising powers to the European Community for four years and thereby robbed this Parliament of those powers? The Leader of the House denied the claim of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). If the Chancellor made a statement, he could clarify the position. At the same time we might be given some information on the VAT payments on account order and whether it should really be taken on Tuesday, particularly since the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has not yet completed its deliberations and has asked for a memorandum, which it is to consider on Tuesday. The Committee may wish to take evidence upon it, but it will be denied the opportunity of doing so if the order is taken on Tuesday.

**Mr. Newton:** I note the hon. Gentleman's last point and I undertake to reflect upon it. As for his first point, I certainly did not seek to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had had no discussions on these matters. That is clearly not the case. The Chancellor clearly has had discussions on these matters. I simply made the point that no conclusion about the relevant directive had been reached. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention and, for that matter, the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood to the fact that the Chancellor is to speak at the end of the debate that is about to begin.

**Mr. Michael Spicer** (Worcestershire, South): I think I am right in saying that my right hon. Friend was present for the short Adjournment debate that I had earlier this week on the question of illegal encampment by gipsies and new age travellers, and in particular on the question of the mass rallies that they have held. He will know from that debate that there is tremendous interest in the subject on this side of the House. There was an unusually high turnout for the debate, particularly by my hon. Friends. I wonder whether my right hon. Friend can accommodate that matter before the recess by arranging for a debate on the subject?

**Mr. Newton:** I am very conscious of the interest in this subject, not least because this is probably the third or fourth business question time in the last few weeks at which it has been raised with me by my hon. Friend and other colleagues. I did indeed note the unusually heavy attendance at the Adjournment debate the other night and also the vigour with which my hon. Friend spoke. I do not think I can promise what I would call a dedicated debate but, as I have already said to one or two other hon. Members, there are substantial opportunities to raise such matters next week, so perhaps my hon. Friend will wish to take further advantage of them.

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): In view of reports in the press today that the Home Secretary believes that the draft European frontiers convention should be scrutinised by the House, will the Leader of the House ask the Home Secretary to make a statement before the recess and ensure that time is available for that scrutiny in due course?

**Mr. Newton:** Again, I must reply very much in the terms in which I replied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). I must point out that the matters in question were the subject of substantial evidence given by the Home Office to the Home Affairs Select Committee earlier this year. To suggest that the House is in some way being prevented from taking an interest in these matters goes beyond what the situation would bear.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): Will the Leader of the House consider two linked points about Europe and the media? The first is whether it would be possible to arrange a debate, if that is the appropriate way of dealing with the issue, on the threat to broadcasters and journalists from the European data protection provisions, which, as I understand it, would require individuals to give their consent for the media to have files on them, which is not the best way to help the media to do their job? Secondly, will he try to ensure that European Community procedure does not start leading to Governments having responsibility for print journalists—one can understand that they may have to for broadcasters with limited licences—because we should try to keep the Government and Parliament away from the press's problems?

**Mr. Newton:** They sound like two quite interesting points for my hon. Friend to pursue on one of the occasions that I have already mentioned during these exchanges.

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): Has the Leader of the House had time to study the report which was made available this morning by the Audit Commission on its grave anxieties about whether the Government can deliver their community care policies next April? As even yesterday the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) could not give any commitment on the level of funding available to local authorities and still less on ring fencing, are we not heading for even greater chaos than that identified by Sir Roy Griffiths? Should we not therefore have an urgent debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I have not yet had time to study the Audit Commission's report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but of course I am aware that a substantial debate took place on these matters during consideration of the Community Care Bill yesterday, when a great deal of ground was covered. As with any other matter, the financial and expenditure decisions relating to next year will in the end be taken as part of the public expenditure round this year.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on the Post Office and in particular on the operation of local post offices in the London area where, all too often, closure is proposed against the wishes and interests of local people? Such a debate would give me the opportunity to raise the proposed closure of Church road post office in Northholt, which is a very misguided proposal.

**Mr. Newton:** That sounds like a classic of its kind to be raised on one of the occasions that I have already mentioned—the summer Adjournment debate, the Consolidated Fund debate or the timed Adjournments just before the recess. I wish my hon. Friend luck in securing one of those opportunities.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The Leader of the House will be aware of the question that I have tabled about the transfer of pension funds of workers who have been removed from British Nuclear Fuels to the Uranium Enrichment Company. My question was redirected from the Treasury to the Department of Trade and Industry. Through my own research, I subsequently discovered that the matter is the subject of a Treasury policy which will result in those workers losing some of the benefits of the scheme that they are in. The workers regard it as a fraud of Maxwellian proportions.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman not to argue a case but to come directly to the point. That is the purpose of business questions.

**Mr. Miller:** Will the Leader of the House make a statement to the House next week to explain that policy, and to tell us how many other industrial workers covered by the civil service schemes are covered by it?

**Mr. Newton:** You will probably agree, Madam Speaker, that for me to do so would lie slightly outwith my duties as Leader of the House. However, as part of those duties, I shall certainly try to ensure that the hon. Gentleman receives an appropriate response from either or both of my right hon. Friends.

**Mr. Christopher Gill** (Ludlow): If there is a prospect of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer being invited, in conjunction with the other European Finance Ministers, to agree a minimum rate of tax, would it not be appropriate for us to debate the sovereignty of the House in taxation matters?

**Mr. Newton:** I do not know whether my hon. Friend will seek to catch your eye in the forthcoming debate,

Madam Speaker—still less would I pre-empt the decision that you would make should he do so. However, if he succeeds, he may wish to raise the matter that he has mentioned.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): Why do the Government refuse to make a statement on aid to Sarajevo? Is it because the Minister is in the House of Lords?

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman will know that Yugoslavia, and in particular the Community's attitude to it and part in its affairs, is one of the subjects to which the British Government will attach importance during the presidency. Indeed, I do not think that I would be breaking the confidence of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary if I said that he has just whispered in my ear that he intends to refer to that subject in the speech which he is about to make.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs** (Wyre Forest): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the concern of the parliamentary human rights group about the human rights abuses by the Indonesian Government in East Timor, which have cost 200,000 lives over the past 10 years. May we have a statement or a debate next week, so that we can discuss both the conditionality of aid being given to countries with human rights records such as that of Indonesia, and the publication of the recent report on those appalling problems by Amos Wako, the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations?

**Mr. Newton:** In refraining from giving my hon. Friend the undertaking that he seeks, I must fall back on referring not to the debate about to take place but to the other opportunities next week which I have already mentioned.

**Mr. Frank Field** (Birkenhead): Is the Leader of the House aware that yet another group of workers in Cammell Laird have been given their redundancy notices today as a direct result of the Government's policy in "Options for Change"? That policy brings general benefits for the community, but its cost is being borne disproportionately by a minority, who were previously in defence jobs. Will the Leader of the House concede the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms. Eagle) and myself for a debate before Parliament rises on what selective measures are necessary to ensure that the communities concerned make a successful transition from military to civilian production?

**Mr. Newton:** Again, I must draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that there are a number of opportunities during the coming week when he may be able to raise that matter. If he chooses to do so, I wish him well.

**Mr. Andrew MacKinlay** (Thurrock): Will the Leader of the House reflect between now and next week on the bewilderment of many of our constituents, who cannot understand why, for three months in the summer, the role of Parliament in checking, cajoling and criticising the Executive becomes unimportant? They cannot understand that nothing happens in government all that time. Will the Leader of the House therefore consider whether it might be appropriate for us to have at least a brief sitting some time in September, when questions could be put to the Executive and it could be brought to account, rather than our meeting only when legislation is being railroaded through by the Government?

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): I should not push that too far.

**Mr. Newton:** For once, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I are in complete agreement. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman was only about 10 seconds ahead of me. I was about to say that I would not chance putting that proposition to a vote.

However, I recognise why my fellow Essex Member of Parliament—I would not dream of calling him Essex man—raises the question. It is important that our constituents should understand that the recess is not a question of our all going away to spend three months on the beach—at least, I cannot speak for the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), but I do not expect to do so.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): Will the Leader of the House invite the President of the Board of Trade to come to the House next week to make a statement in defence of the way in which European Community money, given from its budget to modernise pits, has been spent on sacking people? The Leader of the House should also ask his right hon. Friend to explain why not a single penny piece of RECHAR money, which was intended to replace jobs in the coal mining areas and which was allocated for that end three years ago, has been spent on that purpose.

**Mr. Newton:** I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will, as ever, be in almost ceaseless action next week, because he is due to take part in the debate on Monday 6 July on the Opposition motion and to answer Trade and Industry questions on Wednesday 8 July.

**Ms. Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): Will the Leader of the House make time next week for the Secretary of State for Defence to come to the House to make a statement on the Government's policy on defence diversification in the light of the redundancies announced at Cammell Laird today, which affect not only the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) but my constituents?

**Mr. Newton:** I note what the hon. Lady says, but, necessarily, I must simply advert to the remarks that I made to her hon. Friend and neighbour, the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Does the Lord President recollect that, at column 397 in last week's *Hansard*, he gave the undertaking that he would consider the three orders on Libya? As he is now flanked by the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State—the right hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad)—can he explain whether the orders recommended by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) will give us the opportunity to ask deep and serious questions about whether the Foreign Office might not be wrong about Libya? It would also give us the opportunity to consider the powerful letter written by Mr. John Lace, the managing director of Babcock and Wilcox, which the Minister of State has seen, because, after all, 5,500 of our fellow countrymen are in Libya and enormous engineering orders are at stake.

**Mr. Newton:** I have also seen that letter. The sensible course for me to pursue in response to the hon. Gentleman is to say that, manifestly, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and other Foreign Office Ministers now present will have noted what he said.

**Mr. Rupert Allason** (Torbay): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is considerable surprise at the fact that, despite the turmoil at one of the country's largest national newspaper groups, Mirror Group Newspapers plc, which has lost its chairman and its finance director this week and which is due to hold its annual general meeting within 10 days, no Government statement appears to be on the cards next week? Does my right hon. Friend agree that such a statement would be appropriate? Does he also agree that it would be a good idea for Lord Williams, Lord Donoughue and others to follow the example of Lord Walker and declare how much income they have received from non-executive directorships in Mirror Group Newspapers plc in the past few years?

**Mr. Newton:** I sense from the way in which you are moving in your seat, Madam Speaker, that you might check me if I sought to respond in anything like the terms invited by my hon. Friend. I am sure that those at whom his remarks appear to have been directed will note them.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House give further consideration to what he said to his hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and recognise that, on such a vital issue as a treaty that has implications for British sovereignty, there should be a free vote, if I may say so, on both side of the House? Could arrangements be so made? It would be quite wrong for the Government to rely on Labour Members to help them out of their difficulties in Committee. Labour Members were not elected for that purpose.

**Mr. Newton:** I think that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that, happily, the voting arrangements in this place are not a matter for me, but the seats held by the usual channels are fairly well occupied at the moment, so no doubt those concerned will have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said.

**Rev. Martin Smyth** (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will know that I welcome the announcement about the nomination of Select Committees, but look forward to the day when the Northern Ireland Office—the last bastion of oligarchy in this place—might be so scrutinised. Is there the possibility of a statement from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland next week arising from the incidents reported from the frontier yesterday evening, so that we might learn when the trial took place; whether there are audio tapes of the interrogation; and whether justice is being done when people regularly cry for justice and their fellow travellers throughout the world support them?

**Mr. Newton:** I know of no plan of my right hon. and learned Friend to make a statement at the moment. However, I note the points that the hon. Gentleman makes by implication, and I will ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend is aware of them.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): May I press the Leader of the House on the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard)? The right hon. Gentleman may not have seen today's issue of *The Guardian*, in which there was a remarkable interview with the Home Secretary, in which he admitted that the convention on free movement within the EC could be signed by the Government without the House seeing it —still less having a chance to debate or amend it. Will the Leader of the House understand that a cosy discussion in the Select Committee on Home Affairs is no adequate democratic substitute for the House having the fullest opportunity to see, debate and possibly amend that important convention, which will place serious obstacles in the way of non-EC nationals enjoying free movement within the EC?

**Mr. Newton:** I have, of course, seen the report in *The Guardian*. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that conventions govern the way in which draft conventions —we are talking about a draft convention, not a signed convention—are laid before the House. However, I will ensure that the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend is drawn to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): In view of the intense public interest, can we have an assurance from the Leader of the House this afternoon that next week the Minister of Agriculture will make a statement on the conclusions of the International Whaling Commission? As there is unanimity in the House on the issue, such a statement would give the House an opportunity yet again to let the Japanese, Icelanders and Norwegians know just how strongly we feel about whales and the possible decision of those countries to continue to flout international whaling agreements.

**Mr. Newton:** I am quite sure that the hon. Gentleman speaks for many hon. Members on both sides of the House when he expresses concern about some of the developments at the International Whaling Commission. I cannot commit my right hon. Friend to making a statement at the Dispatch Box, but I will ensure that he is made aware of the hon. Gentleman's request.

**Mr. Win Griffiths** (Bridgend): As the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), is on the Government Front Bench, may I thank him for the fact that, following my representations and those of others yesterday, the Government have issued stronger advice to people warning them not to travel in France this weekend. However, I want to refer to the reply that the Leader of the House gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) about using the debate a week today to raise issues about the blockade in France.

Is the Leader of the House aware that my constituents were stuck in the motorway service station for four days? I would have liked the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office or some other responsible person to make a statement in the House about what was happening in France three days ago. Can we have a statement next week, because there is also talk about action to spoil the Barcelona Olympics? We need quick action, not a four or five-day wait for a debate 11 days afterwards.

**Mr. Newton:** In reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who is no longer in his place, I drew attention to the opportunities for raising various matters next week. That was not intended to be a flat negative to his suggestion, but I cannot promise that a particular statement will be made at a particular time.

**Miss Joan Lestor** (Eccles): Bearing in mind the Prime Minister's instant dismissal of the definition of poverty given by the National Children's Home last month, although that definition reflected the experience of many of my constituents and, I am sure, the constituents of many of my hon. Friends, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Prime Minister to give us his definition of poverty and arrange for a debate on the matter at the earliest possible moment?

**Mr. Newton:** In a relatively recent incarnation, I had considerable experience of arguments about definitions of poverty. No Government of any colour have signed up to a definition of poverty. It was at least as much resisted by the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) when he was Minister for Social Security as by anybody else. There are genuine difficulties, and that is the point that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was making.

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): Further to the right hon. Gentleman's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), is the Leader of the House aware that the European convention on frontier control is a classified document and that it will not become public until after it comes into force? There is no point in our purportedly holding Ministers to account if we cannot discuss treaties of that importance. Does he not understand that that matter goes to the heart of parliamentary democracy and that we should be able to discuss such matters before they come into force rather than when we face a fait accompli? Will the right hon. Gentleman urge the Home Secretary to come to the House to make a statement on what is in the draft treaty and let us have a debate so that we can discuss it properly?

**Mr. Newton:** As I have now said a couple of times, there has certainly been no attempt to conceal from anybody the points that are covered by the draft convention. It is, as I understand it, normal practice that draft conventions of that kind are laid before the House when they have been signed. I was making no more than that point.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Leader of the House give a firm assurance that he will make time available before the recess either for the Home Secretary to introduce the legislation that will be necessary to delay or cancel local government elections in Wales next year, or for a statement from the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for Wales that there will be no such cancellation? Does he accept that it would be intolerable for us to go from the House for the summer recess without the question whether there will be local government elections next year answered firmly and once and for all?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who is my appropriate right hon. Friend in that respect.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard the Leader of the House refer to a whisper from his right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary about the fact that the Foreign Secretary was likely to make a statement on aid to Yugoslavia during his statement at the beginning of the next debate. Is not that a prime example of how development issues are being marginalised in the House of Commons? Because a Development Minister is not in the House of Commons but only in the other place, statements are now being grafted on the back——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman had the privilege of making that point earlier and he was heard in good order by the House. I hear no whispers whatsoever in the House. We have to wait for the debate to see what statements are to be made.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Further to my point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to press it, but it is a very important issue of principle. I am not alluding to the question that I asked. I am simply saying that, historically, statements were made to the House of Commons by Aid Ministers on such matters. That is no longer the case. When an important statement has to be made on matters relating to aid and development, the Foreign Secretary makes them in the course of other statements that he is making to the House, as indeed is happening today.

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a matter for the Chair.

## Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill

4.8 pm

**Madam Speaker:** I have a short statement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment which will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund (Appropriation) Bill on Thursday 9 July.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Tuesday 7 July. A list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day. Normally, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a little discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, up to a maximum of three hours.

Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different hon. Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list. As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, I remind hon. Members that it is their responsibility to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

## Statutory Instruments, &c.

**Madam Speaker:** With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.).*

DATA PROTECTION

That the draft Data Protection (Regulation of Financial Services etc.) (Subject Access Exemption) (Amendment) Order 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

RIGHTS OF THE SUBJECT

That the draft Access to Personal Files (Housing) (Scotland) Regulations 1992 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

*Question agreed to.*

**Mr. Bob Cryer** (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that earlier we had a discussion about "Erskine May". If we are to go into arguments about the use of words with which some of us will disagree, it might be helpful if copies of "Erskine May" were available to Members. There is no copy of "Erskine May" in either Lobby. That is extremely unusual. Some hon. Member may have taken it.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): You cannot trust anyone.

**Mr. Cryer:** My hon. Friend may make fun, but the point is important because "Erskine May" is the document under which the proceedings of the Chamber are conducted. For some years, Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop, a former Member of Parliament, urged strongly that hon. Members should be provided with a copy of "Erskine May". This might be a good moment to consider that, because the document may become increasingly useful.

**Madam Speaker:** That is a matter which may well be looked into. I may tell the hon. Gentleman that there has not been a list of prohibited words in "Erskine May" for many years.

## European Community (United Kingdom Presidency)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

*[Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 10962/89 + ADD1, relating to Turkey's application for membership, 7867/91, relating to Austria's application for membership, 9497/91, relating to higher education in the Community, and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 28th February 1992, relating to the Commission's programme for 1992.]*

**Madam Speaker** There is a great deal of interest in the debate so I have to limit speeches to 10 minutes between 7 pm and 9 pm. Would those who speak outside that time please exercise voluntary restraint in fairness to others?

4.11 pm

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** Before I turn to the internal affairs of the Community, perhaps I could say something about the tragedy outside the Community's borders which, on present showing, is likely to take up more of the time of the Foreign Office during our presidency than any other single matter.

I am not particularly optimistic about the next six months in Yugoslavia. The way in which the country has disintegrated is clearly a disaster for its people. The peoples of Yugoslavia could not be held together by force, and the attempt to keep something together by consent was wrecked. The result is the unleashing of destructive hatred on a scale which will not be easily or quickly checked. It certainly cannot be halted from outside.

However, we must go on trying. I shall discuss the means of doing so in a moment. It would be wrong in my experience to suppose that this would best be done in the old-fashioned way, with Britain, France, Germany, Italy and so on choosing their clients and backing them against each other. It must be right to work out, through discussion and argument, the most concerted approach possible of the Twelve. That task falls to the presidency.

Yugoslavia had been teetering on the brink of crisis for some years before the unilateral declarations of independence a year ago by Slovenia and Croatia. That brought tension to a new pitch. Before last summer, it was my hope that the republics could establish new patterns of co-operation—a Yugoslavia by consent.

The ethnic picture is too complicated to allow a neat division of the territory. Almost one in five marriages are across ethnic lines. The republics are a mosaic of different groups. Towns, villages and even apartment blocks are mixed. The economies of the six republics are too closely intertwined to allow for a quick divorce. Their main lines of communication lie through each other's territories.

Although it was clearly right to hope for a Yugoslavia by consent, during last summer and autumn that hope faded. Still we sought a general settlement which dealt with the legitimate interests of all the peoples of Yugoslavia and did not single out particular cases. Then we said that, under certain conditions, we would recognise individual republics. In mid-January, the Twelve recognised Croatia and Slovenia. The timing will continue to be a matter of discussion. Some say that we acted too hastily. Most Opposition Members still hold that view. Some say that we

did not act fast enough. Left to themselves, the Germans would have recognised them a good deal earlier than the British, and the French somewhat later.

Looking back, we see that there was never an ideal moment in the crisis when such action could have had a decisive influence on bringing about a painless peace. That has taught us a lesson that we must remember: we have to recognise the limits of what outsiders can do. Such developments do not yield too easily to external influences or logic, because history, hatred and revenge remain powerful. Local leaders do not respond readily, even to neighbours who are their nominal superiors. The brokering of agreements entails showing several awkward and reluctant people simultaneously that their interests will be best served by compromise.

We can have a part in trying to achieve such compromises. The two previous presidencies, the Dutch and the Portuguese, have followed a twin-track policy that we shall continue. The United Nations is responsible for peacekeeping. The Community has a general remit from the conference on security and co-operation in Europe to try to make peace.

We have a dual role as president of the Council of Ministers and a permanent member of the Security Council. I hope that that will make it a little easier to co-ordinate action between the United Nations and the EC —I was covering such matters at lunch with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an attempt to do just that.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): Is it not a great tragedy that it has taken the United States to send forces into the region, when that should have been a matter for the European Community? Surely, if the Serbian irregulars in the hills around Sarajevo start lobbing bombs and mortars into that city, we should give those irregulars an ultimatum: if they do not cease their action, Western European Union military forces under United Nations jurisdiction should be used to destroy the batteries in the hills around Sarajevo.

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall come to that issue, but it is much easier to propose such an operation than to carry it out, and a great deal easier to start it than to bring it to a successful end.

The Community has two main pieces of machinery available. The first is Lord Carrington's conference and its sub-committees, which we shall reinforce during our presidency. We owe a considerable debt to Lord Carrington, who has no personal motive in taking on the thankless task towards the end of his distinguished public career. He is flying to Sarajevo again tomorrow in another attempt to bring together and suggest solutions to leaders in that country.

The second piece of machinery, which is much less well know, is the EC monitoring mission. In the coming weeks, I shall try to ensure that what it does is better understood, as its staff, who operate locally, are in many ways the unsung heroes of the conflict. They are young men and women who defuse local tensions and keep peace between villages in Croatia. The conference deals with large-scale political problems, and the monitors deal with the local, but potentially just as explosive, issues.

There has been considerable investment in both equipment and manpower. We now have 55 staff at the mission, and 15 rank-and-file monitors who are retired service officers are on contract to the Foreign Office. There is also a 40-strong headquarters staff, of whom 10 are FCO officials and 30 are service officers. We have just appointed Mr. Ramsay Melhuish, formerly our ambassador in Bangkok, to lead the mission, supported by General David Cranston. I hope that, as the House learns more of what those at the mission are doing on behalf of peace in Yugoslavia, it will give them increasing recognition and support in their difficult and dangerous work.

**Mr. Robert N. Wareing** (Liverpool, West Derby): I accept what the Foreign Secretary says about Lord Carrington and the work of the monitors, some of whom I met in Croatia. I am disturbed that, during the six months of our presidency, there may well be a recurrence of violence in Croatia, not only in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is essential that great pressure should be exerted on President Tudjman, as he does not have a good reputation, and the human rights record in Croatia is not strong. The people who live in Krajina, who are mainly Serbs, are denied Croatian citizenship. Although it is right to sanction Serbia, it is equally right to put the utmost possible pressure on the Croatians.

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree that it is certainly important to keep up the positive pressure on President Tudjman in Croatia.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North) *rose*——

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but then I should like to get on.

**Mr. Winnick:** To avoid any misunderstanding arising from the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), is the Foreign Secretary aware that there is bound to be considerable support for the humanitarian measures that he mentioned, such as the airlift and monitoring, but there is no support in the House or in the country for military intervention on a large scale, or of any kind, with the possible repercussions of getting bogged down in a civil war? Can the Foreign Secretary assure the House that, if there is any question of such intervention during the long summer recess, the House will be recalled? The Government would need the authority of the House to follow that course, and I hope that they will not embark on it.

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Member's point has general support in the House. I have certainly found that to be the case in all the questions and supplementary questions that I have answered on the subject. I have no plans for, and I do not think that there is any likelihood of our wishing to propose, the intervention of British ground troops in a hostile situation.

The UN protection force is nearly fully deployed in its three areas of responsibility in Croatia, and, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) knows, it includes a British field ambulance team of nearly 300 men —which is why I chose my words carefully—who are deployed there for medical help. UNPROFOR will shortly have a Canadian battalion at Sarajevo airport. It has done a good job of partially reopening the airport for relief supplies.

I have just checked and the latest situation gives some grounds for optimism. President Mitterrand's brave flight to the city has helped to create a chance, and the

*[Mr. Hurd]*

international community must now establish itself in charge of Sarajevo airport. Obviously control of the airport is vital if relief supplies are to get in.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) should think that it is demeaning to the House if, as the Secretary of State responsible for overseas aid, I give the Government's views on such matters rather than my noble Friend Baroness Chalker, who is in charge of the Overseas Development Administration. Despite his disapproval, let me do so.

The humanitarian situation is our first concern. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees is establishing the needs of the Bosnians quickly and accurately. Now that the airport is temporarily open and in the hands of the UN, experts will be able to assess exactly what is needed and to order supplies such as baby foods, basic foodstuffs and medicines and distribute them through the four depots which have already been identified in the city centre.

As from today, our aircraft are taking part in the international effort under UN auspices. They held back at the specific request of the UN, which did not want a flow of unco-ordinated aircraft into the airport which was imperfectly controlled. For the moment that has been resolved and our Hercules planes are beginning to fly, first to Zagreb and then, as part of the co-ordinated effort, to Sarajevo. This is in addition to the £9·7 million that we British have provided, in different ways, for humanitarian relief in Yugoslavia.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): May I clarify the position? None of us wants military intervention. Is the Foreign Secretary ruling out air cover for supplies provided to Sarajevo in Hercules transport planes which might be at risk?

**Mr. Hurd:** There are no plans for that, but that was not covered by my remarks, which were in answer to a question about ground troops. There is no plan for that because the humanitarian effort is unresisted. There is a certain amount of firing, but there are clearly no attacks on those bringing relief supplies or on the Canadians guarding the airport.

If that situation were to change, I am sure that the Security Council would want to consider the matter and perhaps consider a new resolution—but that is all ifs. At the moment the situation is as I have said.

What can we realistically hope to achieve in six months? In the best case, we could succeed during our presidency in bringing about a ceasefire which lasts in Bosnia, keeping the ceasefire in Croatia, reducing the tension in Kosovo, which I have not talked about but which one of my hon. Friends asked me about yesterday, brokering a settlement between the former Yugoslavia republic of Macedonia and Greece, and getting all the main parties closer to a general settlement. But, as I have said, I am not optimistic, because one can see further tragedies waiting to happen: renewed fighting in Croatia and Bosnia or an outbreak in Kosovo and continued deadlock elsewhere.

I do not believe—this is a point that I was going to make anyway—that the House would readily accept that it was right to send British troops to seek to settle by force any of these problems. The risk of that would be greater than the likely benefits. But, short of that, I am clear that we must do everything we can, and we will use all sensible means, to deal with this linked chain of crises, which is a nightmare to the peoples of Yugoslavia and a continuing reproach to Europe as a whole.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman again.

**Mr. Banks** *rose*——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The Foreign Secretary has said that he is not giving way.

**Mr. Hurd:** It follows from that that at all kinds of meetings in the next six months my colleagues and I will have to take the chair in discussions on Yugoslav matters. I would not be happy to do that unless I had been to the area. I have met, I suppose, most of the main protagonists in one way or another, but never in the country itself. So I intend——

**Mr. Banks:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Secretary of State is in danger of misleading the House in respect of my comments.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I do not think that we need to have any more of this this afternoon. What is the point of order for me?

**Mr. Banks:** The point of order is this, Madam Speaker. It has been suggested subsequently that I suggested that ground troops should be sent to that part of the old Yugoslavia around Sarajevo. I never suggested that. I referred to military forces—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. It seems to me that by using a point of order the hon. Gentleman has made it absolutely clear now what he did say.

**Mr. Hurd:** If I misunderstood what the hon. Gentleman was suggesting, I certainly apologise to him. His intervention enabled me to make the point that I wanted to make in any case.

As I was saying, because I feel that I need to have first-hand knowledge and feeling of what is going on, I plan to visit the area the week after next to get a first-hand impression of what is happening. I hope to go to as many of the Yugoslav republics as I can and also to Tirana, the capital of Albania.

There is one other international matter which will take up a good deal of time, I hope, in the first weeks of our presidency. It is the search for agreement in the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. This is not just because the Uruguay round affects our own prosperity, but because it affects our ability and the ability of others to help the developing world, and it affects also their ability to help themselves.

We discuss so often in this House and in international meetings all kinds of schemes, often quite minor, to help the less well-off countries, but an agreement in the Uruguay round would dwarf all the other schemes which I have heard discussed this past year. There is an opportunity. If it is let slip, we do our own interests a disservice, but equally we do a disservice to the interests of those in the poorer parts of the world. We want to conclude the round quickly; we want to get to the finishing post, which I believe is within our reach.

We are to have a summit next week with the Group of Seven leaders at Munich. That offers us a chance to cover the last few yards. The key, as those who follow the matter know, is agreement between the European Community and the United States on a number of agriculture matters. The Community's agreement to reform the CAP may provide—could provide—the means of breakthrough. I am convinced that the remaining differences on agriculture between the EC and the United States could be resolved quickly. They are narrow in substance, because progress has been made, but they are of great political importance. That is the difficulty. But the difficulties are outweighed by the huge advantages to the whole trading world of an agreement.

At Lisbon last weekend the European Council instructed the Commission negotiators to reach an early agreement on agriculture with the United States. We welcome that. We are doing all that we can to support the Commission's efforts. We are in close touch with all our main GATT partners, including the United States.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): To avoid any misunderstanding, because the Government must know, are the CAP reforms likely to increase or decrease total public expenditure on agriculture within the EC?

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not think that they will yield any savings, but, by shifting the way in which agriculture is helped, they make it easier to reach a settlement in the GATT round, and that is the point that I am on at the moment.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): I understand perfectly well why the Foreign Secretary has devoted a lengthy passage of his speech to Yugoslavia and I accept the importance of the GATT round, but he will not be surprised to hear that I am gravely disturbed that on external matters he has said not one word about the way in which the EC and the Foreign Ministers seek to deal with the situation in South Africa, which is equally grave. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will say something on that before he sits down.

**Mr. Hurd:** I cannot deal with everything. I answered a question on South Africa at some length yesterday and the hon. Gentleman will have opportunities to press me on it if he so wishes. I would rather not be diverted on to that at present.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** No; I must get on.

**Mr. Dalyell:** It is not on Libya.

**Mr. Hurd:** I dare say that there are a number of other things that it is not on, but I shall still not give way to the hon. Gentleman, at least not for a bit. I shall give way later.

The House has had many opportunities recently, as I well know, to question Ministers about the consequences of the Danish referendum, on which I have nothing new to add today. We are in a period of pause. One uncertainty was removed by the Irish referendum and another will be settled one way or another by the French vote on 20 September. The third uncertainty is the position of the Danes.

The Danish Government cannot ratify the treaty because of the referendum result in Denmark, but neither have they told us that they will not ratify in future. Instead they haved asked for time to consider their options. They have said that all options are open, and that is fair enough. We need to know in the autumn how they intend to proceed and how the rest of us might help. Denmark clearly cannot be coerced, nor can she be excluded. She is a member of the Community in good standing and she will take over the presidency from us on new year's day. When we know in the autumn how Denmark intends to proceed we can judge when it would be right to ask the House to proceed with the legislation needed to ratify the treaty here..

The Prime Minister has repeatedly stressed our support for the treaty that we negotiated in good faith. I am clear myself that our efforts to achieve the Community that we want, to which I am coming in a minute, need to build on ratification of the treaty rather than on its destruction.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): This is one of the fundamental points of how we progress post-Maastricht and post the Danish referendum. Is there any possibility whatever that the Government will be dropping the idea that there should be unanimity among all member states for the ratification process? Is the right hon. Gentleman setting a clear deadline for the middle of the autumn whereby Denmark will have to say whether it will remain a member of the Community?

**Mr. Hurd:** To answer the hon. Lady's second point, I am not going to be precise about timing. As to her first question, it is neither our wish not within our means to drop the requirement for unanimity in ratifying the Maastricht treaty.

The interest in Maastricht will not distract us from the rest of our programme. The completion of the single European market has long been the Government's objective, and we are nearly there. It is important to get the right single market. It must be liberal and open. Our future wealth depends on our manufacturing industries and services remaining internationally competitive. It must be right to build a home market for European firms that is larger than America and twice as large as Japan and Australasia.

The first task of our presidency is to complete as best we can the necessary legislation. There has been recent progress. The air liberalisation package agreed last week by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is a good one, but as one reaches the end of a process and tackles the last 10 per cent. of the single market, one reaches the most difficult issues.

We want agreement especially on road transport, energy, and medicines. We want to help to set the agenda for after 1992. The single market, once agreed, must work efficiently, and there must be effective enforcement. The key legislation must be implemented and enforced. That is why, at our suggestion, the Maastricht treaty gave the European Court of Justice the power, for the first time, to fine member states if they fail to implement the rules that they agreed.

The single market is something on which all 12 member states have basically agreed for years. The work has been in the detail. In the end there was a treaty which we all

*[Mr. Hurd]*

signed and which we have all, throughout the presidencies of all 12 member states, worked meticulously to implement.

In the next six months, three other matters will arise on which, in the past, Britain has pressed the Community particularly hard. At first, it was uphill on all three, but we now have strong allies. The flow of ideas is in our favour, and we can give each of the three a further push.

We want to enlarge the Community, we want the Community to practise the same self-restraint in spending that most national Governments how have to exercise, and we want to restrain the Commission's intrusiveness.

Britain has long stood for a wider Europe, starting with the EFTA countries—which will in any case be economically linked to the Community from the start of next year because of the successful negotiation of the European Economic Area. At Lisbon last weekend, we agreed that preparations for negotiations for the accession of the EFTA countries should go ahead under the British presidency. Austria, Sweden, Finalnd, and Switzerland have already applied, and Norway may follow in November. Those countries are applying to join the union set out in the Maastricht treaty.

Much preparation is needed. We must complete the mandates for the Commission to negotiate with those applicants. By the time of the European Council meeting in Edinburgh in December, we aim to have all those preparations in place—we were working that out with the Commissioner yesterday—so that negotiations can be launched as soon as future financing is settled and the Maastricht treaty is ratified. The aim is to complete negotiations during 1993 with a view to the countries that I named joining by 1995. That has for a long time been our preferred timetable. I agree that it is ambitious, but it is still realistic.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Has the right hon. Gentleman had time to consider the document published by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, "Greening Europe: the First Steps"? In particular, what consideration has been given to the EC's fifth environment action programme, "Towards Sustainability", and what progress is being made on reaching agreement and implementing it?

**Mr. Hurd:** If the hon. Gentleman had asked about Libya I might have replied, but I cannot reply in respect of the directive that he mentioned. However, as it is clearly an important matter, I shall write to him giving the information that we have.

We are not talking just about the EFTA countries. At Lisbon we also agreed on the importance of relations with Turkey. We have circulated to partners Britain's ideas on enhancing the relationship between the Community and Turkey. We want to discuss at the July meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council how the Community might take these ideas forward. Then we have the bids of two very friendly countries in the Mediterranean—Cyprus and Malta. Those bids have to be considered on their own merits, and we need to develop relations through the association agreements that we have. We expect the commission's opinion on Malta, and possibly its opinion on Cyprus, later this year. I am quite clear that, whatever the result of those opinions, the Community needs a new and closer relationship with Turkey, Malta and Cyprus —a relationship which does not close the door on eventual accession and which, meanwhile, strengthens the practical links.

Then there are the new democracies in central Europe. We should like the Community, by the turn of the century, to embrace those democracies also. The Community is a pole of attraction for all these countries, and at Lisbon the partners endorsed our view that the Community should continue to build its relationships, particularly with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, whether or not Czechoslovakia divides itself. Agreements with the countries that I have just mentioned have already been signed. They need to be carried through quickly and effectively, particularly the provisions on the liberalisation of trade. We want to conclude similar association agreements with Bulgaria and Romania, and we want to enhance trade and co-operation agreements with Russia and the other main states of the former Soviet Union.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): While I apologise for introducing yet another burdensome subject for an already overloaded presidency, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether, during this presidency or perhaps next year, we could make a start on the thorny subject of trying to reduce the number of working languages in the Community to three or four? This is especially important in view of the enlargement projects. I am aware of the enormous difficulties that will be involved, but we shall incur incredible expense if we do not broach the subject despite the huge problems there will be in getting agreement.

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend is quite right. The system is expensive and cumbersome, and will become more so. It would be a little difficult for the British—I must say "British"—whose language is spoken quite extensively by other people, to put forward that proposal. However, that did not deter the *Daily Mail* a few months ago. But experience will probably be more effective than would an initiative during our presidency.

There is a second stone that we have been pushing up the hill. Although it has been a rather painful process, we are now making progress with the objective. I shall not say a great deal about it as it falls into the domain of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who will wind up the debate. I refer to future financing. The background has changed for the better. In the old days, whenever financial issues in the Community got difficult it was often suggested that the 12 Foreign Ministers should produce what was called a political solution. That meant a solution that excluded the Finance Ministers and involved spending money that they were reluctant to spend. That is no longer the mood of the Community. The politics of the political solution has changed. What was once regarded as the somewhat eccentric rigour of the British Treasury has become the conviction—indeed, the necessity—of many member states.

At Lisbon it was clear that many member states—not just us—are unhappy with the idea of large increases in Community spending at a time of economic retrenchment at home. We pointed out that unnecesary spending could make ratification of the treaty even more difficult. So, during our presidency, we shall be looking for an agreement which respects what was set out at Maastricht on a cohesion fund but which also respects budget discipline and the need for sound public finances. We have

all made it clear to our partners that there can be no question of any reduction in the United Kingdom abatement, which has so far been worth more than £12 billion to this country. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor, when he replies this evening, will obviously develop these themes.

Finally, there is widespread interest throughout the Community, and certainly in this House, in the concept of subsidiarity or minimum interference. Let me say something about the background to this.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stamford): Earlier this week the Prime Minister made reference to subsidiarity. He said that it was his intention, during the course of his presidency, to ensure, as regards the Community as whole, that we would do everything to bring that principle into reality in the working practices of the Community. Does my hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary intend to apply the principle to the central bank and all that goes with it? At the bottom of the process, at the level that is most important to the citizen, there is the exercise of the vote in the choice of a party at a general election. In effect, that would be taken away by the transfer of economic and social matters to central bankers. Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that he will see that that principle is applied to the central bank?

**Mr. Hurd:** The basic choice is a question of whether there is a single currency and a single bank If we have a single currency and a single bank on which everybody agrees, that will not be a question of subsidiarity. But neither this House nor this country has made that choice, such was the skill of the negotiations conducted by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Mr. Nicholas Budgen** (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** No. I want to get on.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) pointed out in his question to me yesterday, subsidiarity goes to the heart of how the Community exercises its authority. How does it get its authority? How and where should decisions be made? The Community is one based on law, and the treaty of Rome set the framework. We, the 12 Governments, take decisions in the Council of Ministers. The areas of policy where such decisions can be taken are set out in the treaty of Rome. That is what is meant by Community competence. Those areas can be extended, as they were in the Single European Act. Within those areas of Community competence, the Commission proposes the draft legislation.

**Mr. Budgen:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** I will give way to my hon. Friend if he contains himself for a minute or two.

The European Parliament has certain powers to propose amendments to draft legislation, and the Council of Ministers—the 12 Governments—takes the final decision. The Maastricht treaty added limited extensions to Community competence by adding new policy articles to the treaty of Rome. In many respects—perhaps most respects—these were a clarification or codification of existing practice. They showed where the boundaries lay.

But, in addition—and this for the first time—the treaty of Maastricht checked the growth of competence. It did so in two ways. First, it formalised, in the treaty framework, the legitimacy of intergovernmental co-operation between the 12 member states in certain crucial areas of policy—foreign policy, justice and home affairs. Secondly, it defined the limits of Community activity in some specific areas by precluding what it called harmonising measures, such as those that have caused so much difficulty and controversy in the past.

**Mr. Budgen:** I am sure my right hon. Friend knows that many of our right hon. and hon. Friends voted for the Second Reading of the Bill following the Prime Minister's assertion that he had obtained a legally binding text on subsidiarity. The impression was given that the intrusive powers of the Community had been driven back in a final and satisfactory way. We now find that a large number of distinguished legal academics say robustly either that it is gobbledegook or that it is wholly unenforceable and, therefore, that the basis upon which many people supported the Bill has turned out to be false.

**Mr. Hurd:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for leading me neatly into the next part of my speech. In response to his importunities I gave way just a little too early. My answer to his question will come just a little late—in a minute or two.

The policies fall into three categories—those where the Community has no competence, some important ones of which are defined in the treaty of Maastricht; those where the Community has exclusive competence, such as the negotiations on the Uruguay round; and those of parallel competence, where both member states and the Community have a role to play. In that last area, a choice arises over and over again. Should the Community act, or the member states, when action is required? We must apply the principle of subsidiarity against the background of those three policy areas.

Article 3b defines subsidiarity. In its fully developed form, it applies in particular to areas of parallel competence, but it also has a general application, requiring all activity—including activity within the exclusive Community competence—to be governed by the necessity test: any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister are right: the text is crucial. It will certainly be crucial once the treaty has been ratified, but even before that the principle can be put into practice. That is the importance of the conclusions reached at Lisbon, on which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on Monday. The Heads of State and Government decided at Lisbon that now—before ratification, before there is a legal text—urgent work should be conducted in the Community institutions, particularly the Commission and the Council, to find procedural and practical steps with which to carry through the principle as soon as possible. They have been asked to report to the Edinburgh Council, where I hope that we can make some firm decisions.

At Lisbon, we also called for a review of existing Community legislation rather than a process of simply working out the right way to apply the principle for the future. We called for a retrospective application of the principle of minimum interference. That report will also be submitted to the European Council in December 1993.

*[Mr. Hurd]*

The Cabinet discussed the work given to the Commission and the Council of Ministers with the full Commission in London yesterday. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave the Commission a clear steer, emphasising that nothing would allay the fears of those who questioned the Community more successfully than an effective work programme this year to apply the principle of minimum interference, not just to future proposals, but to existing Community legislation—and to proposals that are in the pending trays, awaiting consideration by the Council. The Commission will be working urgently on that, and I am sure that it is a welcome step.

If the arrangements work as we intend them to, the effect of the principle will be felt not in judgments by the Court in three or four years' time, not in academic or legal argument, but in its practical application in the Community institutions day by day as decisions are proposed and made.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** (East Lindsey): I am much reassured by what my right hon. Friend has said about subsidiarity, with which I am sure we all agree. If we could secure a greatly improved text of article 3b which would definitely be enforced by the Community, and which the European Court would not always define in a federal sense, we would be a long way towards achieving what everyone wants.

Let me, however, give my right hon. Friend an example of how the system works in practice. Only a few days ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—to his personal chagrin, I am sure—had to come back and report that we would lose the freedom to reduce our VAT rate below 15 per cent. That drives a coach and horses through the principle of subsidiarity: it will give Britain less control over its sales tax than is exercised by any state of the American Union. There is absolutely no reason why we should not be able to reduce our VAT rate. If the recession worsens, we may wish to do so in order to increase purchasing power and demand.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker** (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The purpose of an intervention is to ask a question, not to make a statement.

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not question your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I expect that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will wish to deal at length with my hon. Friend's question when he winds up the debate. It illustrates an important point: in all kinds of matters, of which VAT is certainly one, there is a long history of Community discussion in the context of completing the single market. The issue has not sprung up suddenly in the past few weeks. As my hon. Friend knows, no conclusion has been reached; but I believe that the ideas advanced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, if they were finally accepted and agreed, would be very much in this country's interests.

**Mrs. Edwina Currie** (Derbyshire, South): Does not the whole principle of subsidiarity rest on the ability of Parliaments, and indeed of Governments, to carry out their side of the work? Is that not shown crucially by their ability to implement their promises and to stick to the results of votes that have been held in Parliaments such as this?

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend has worked that point in very ingeniously, but it chimes appropriately with some of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been saying.

What we must do—and it is not entirely easy as we move from generalities to specifics—is work out what the Commission must do as a result of the conclusions reached at Lisbon. What we must do, in the interests of this country, is work out the areas in which action is needed at a European level—for example, in the completion of the single market—and then to ensure that that action is effective. There is no point in ineffective action at a European level. We must then distinguish between such action and acts of interference—whether on the part of Brussels or, consequentially, on the part of Whitehall—that are unnecessary to any substantial European or national interest.

We must identify the division between the subjects with which the Community has recently dealt before the Maastricht treaty comes into effect. We want the Community, the Commission and the Council to pull back from activities and proposals whose purposes could be handled equally well by member states.

When I look at my diary and those of my colleagues, I sometimes find the prospect of the next six months somewhat daunting. We face a huge array of summits and conferences in all parts of the world. That, however, is the least of the pressures that we shall experience. The world is in a disorderly state, and in problem after problem—from Yugoslavia to Russia, and from Russia to South Africa—the EC is expected to play a part for which its institutions and procedures are not yet fully equipped.

Within the Community, there is a huge volume of work to be transacted, but there is one strengthening and reassuring thought. The agenda that is before us for six months is composed, in large part, of issues in which this country strongly believes, such as enlargement, the reduction of interference, a prudent settlement of the Community's finances, a GATT settlement and completion of the single market. Those are not causes wished on us by others; they are causes in which we strongly believe and which, partly by coincidence, it now falls to us to implement. We shall do that with energy and persistence, supported—I hope and believe—by the great majority of the House.

4.58 pm

**Mr. Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton): The House will have listened attentively to what the Foreign Secretary said about Yugoslavia. He talked of a wish to avoid the attachment to senior or larger European Community members of clients states in the former Yugoslav area. I very much fear that that error has already been made, and that a number of its consequences have led it to tragedy. I believe that it was a serious error for the Council of Ministers to allow itself to be dragged by Germany into making a date for recognition of the republics. The right hon. Gentleman said that that was subject to certain conditions, but Germany, in the interests of the client republics there, made it clear immediately that it had no intention of observing those conditions and would recognise, in any case. That whole process, following the December ministerial Council meeting, has been injurious to Yugoslavia.

The recognition of small, unviable states—unviable both economically and politically—by the European Community and the provision of the cachet of recognition by the European Community has, in my view, encouraged other republics in Yugoslavia to declare their independence. While I would not be so rash as to say that the tragedy of Bosnia-Herzegovina is a direct consequence of recognition, if that decision had not been made six months ago it is possible that Bosnia-Herzegovina would not have been so speedy and so confident in declaring her independence.

I very much hope that this process will be brought to, at any rate, a pause. The consequences of recognition of Macedonia in terms of relationships with both Greece and Bulgaria as well as with Albania could be very serious indeed. I hope that we have learnt some of the lessons from what I regard as a very serious error by the Community because of its failure to think through the concept of a common foreign policy, even though we on the Opposition Benches support the concept of a common foreign policy.

There are lessons to be learned. One lesson—I am glad that the Government have learnt it and I support what the right hon. Gentleman said both yesterday and today—is that military action is more easily entered into than got out of. When I was talking to the incoming Prime Minister of Israel and discussing with him the start of the six-day war —which, after six days, the Israelis won triumphantly—he said to me, "It is much easier to get into a war than to get out of it." At that time he had no idea that the war would last only six days. Going in with force on the ground, without having clear objectives, clear rules of engagement and a clear mandate from the United Nations Security Council, might do more harm than good to the people of the former Yugoslavia and would also place the lives of United Nations troops at risk. I do not see why that should be done, except in an inviolably good cause.

Secondly, sanctions should have been brought in sooner and been much more comprehensive. We advocated that. I am sorry that our advice was not followed.

Thirdly, I believe that the United Nations should have been involved much sooner. It is not that I in any way detract from the role of the European Community, nor do I detract from the praise that I have offered and that I continue to offer for the actions of Lord Carrington, but after the successful action that was undertaken under United Nations authority in driving Iraq out of Kuwait I believe that we ought to have built on the authority of the United Nations that was established at that time. Again I say that all action, whether it be European Community action, or Western European Union action, or action by individual countries, should be taken only under the specific authority of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

I very much hope that the Government will take seriously the proposal that has been made by Mr. Boutros-Ghali—it may be that the Foreign Secretary discussed it with him today—regarding a permanent United Nations structure for military intervention. We advocated that two years ago. Even though one has a proprietary interest in the proposal, I believe that if a United Nations structure for military intervention had been available when Yugoslavia began to break up, some of the tragedies that followed could have been avoided.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Kaufman:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way. This exordium is in response to what was said by the Foreign Secretary. I should like to proceed with the main topic of the debate, having said what I wanted to say to the Foreign Secretary in, I hope, a constructive manner. Time is being lost. It is important that we should not wait for a further tragedy or for another international crisis before a permanent United Nations structure for military intervention is devised and set up in the way that Mr. Boutros-Ghali has sensibly proposed.

The subject of the debate—not that I in any way regret what the Foreign Secretary said about Yugoslavia—is the presidency of the European Community upon which this country embarked yesterday. The presidency gives to the country which holds it the opportunity to stamp its approach on the processes and policies of the Community. It provides the opportunity to advance its own national interest within the Community and to advance the interests of the Community as a whole.

The presidency is a rare opportunity. At present, it comes round only once every six years. Since almost certainly the Community will be enlarged by four new members, and possibly even more, during the next six years, it is likely that United Kingdom presidency will not recur until the end of the century. The presidency is, therefore, an occasion when the United Kingdom Government can propound its own vision of Europe and for Europe, but two obstacles impede a constructive presidency for the United Kingdom.

The first is the lack of a clear statement by the United Kingdom Government of what objectives they seek to attain during the presidency. Almost every day we seem to get a new and different statement from the Government of presidency objectives. In his concluding remarks the right hon. Gentleman gave us a list, some of which, although they have been mentioned here and there, have never been stated before as specific presidency objectives.

On 3 June the Foreign Secretary told us that the Government's priorities included completion of the single market, preparation for enlargement negotiations, finance negotiations and development of closer relations with eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Eight days later, on 11 June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in stating what he called the Government's key priorities, had dropped the development of relations with eastern Europe and added very specifically what he called working towards a conclusion on the Community's future financing. Good luck to him, if he can achieve that in the next six months. Eighteen days later, the Prime Minister on his return from Lisbon suggested that his eyes were set on enlargement and that the new apple of his eye was subsidiarity.

In the first half of June, the Prime Minister's two principal lieutenants could not spare even a word for subsidiarity when they were setting out what they called the Government's key priorities for the presidency, but now the Prime Minister cannot get enough of it. The problem is that he does not seem to know what it means. He cites and re-cites article 3b of the Maastricht treaty as though it were a mantra. The Foreign Secretary did the

*[Mr. Kaufman]*

same today. But article 3b of the Maastricht treaty states only what the Community should not do. It does not state what member states should do.

The Prime Minister seems to imagine that subsidiarity stops short at national Government level and that there should be no decentralisation below the level of national Government. On Monday the Prime Minister denounced what he called the

"centralising trend which was evident . . . in the Single European Act.—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 596.]

That terrible Single European Act! Is my memory playing tricks when I remember that that political equivalent of the black mass was guillotined with the enthusiastic support of the Prime Minister himself? He was an active acolyte in that act of desecration. The president prom at the Albert Hall on 6 September already includes the choral symphony. I recommend that the programme be augmented by another work by Beethoven, "The Overture for the Consecration of the House", or the reconsecration of the House. Although the Prime Minister now chants the litany of subsidiarity, he clearly has no idea what it means. The hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir. P. Tapsell) made a pertinent intervention on the Foreign Secretary who, I am afraid, did not offer further illumination.

On Monday the Prime Minister said:

"Subsidiarity . . . means that the test should be that, if it cannot be done at the national level, perhaps it should be done at the European level. If it can be done best at the national level, it should be done at the national level."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 589.]

This week the Chancellor of the Exchequer provided an interesting example off the Government's view of what should be done at the European level rather than at the national level—the decision to accept the Community as the arbiter for levels of value added tax. The right hon. Gentleman could have vetoed that because the decision was not taken by a qualified majority vote. It had to be taken unanimously.

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont):** The right hon. Gentleman says that I could have vetoed it, but I am sure that he is aware that no decision was taken. In the end, I was the only person to oppose the proposition, so perhaps he will withdraw what he has just said. Also, does he recognise that under article 99 of the treaty of Rome we are committed to the harmonisation of indirect taxes in as far as that is necessary for the internal market? That is something to which he and I, his party and mine, are committed whether he knows it or not—and I suspect that he does not.

**Mr. Kaufman:** I shall make two points in response to the Chancellor's characteristically courteous intervention. First, he has clearly accepted that subsidiarity is not available here. If subsidiarity is not available, his protesting about it this week seems a vain exercise. While it appears that it is inexorable and inevitable and while it appears, from his own words, that he would accept it, he also said that it did not really matter because we were not going to reduce VAT below 15 per cent. in any case. What we have here could not be said by even the most friendly observer of the Government to be a clear definition of subsidiarity in relation to the setting of tax levels.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East) *rose*——

**Mr. Kaufman:** I give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have a feeling that he will make more trouble.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** An unnecessary row is developing. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that article 99 does not say that we are committed to harmonisation? It says that we are committed to harmonisation only in as far as it is necessary to complete the internal market. If the right hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, he will see that during discussions on the Bill we were told that it had no importance whatsoever because Britain did not take the view that the harmonisation of excise duties was necessary to complete the internal market. If he is in any doubt, I ask him please to read *Hansard*. Many hon. Members voted for the Single European Act—stupidly—because they did not know. They were told time and time again that it meant nothing at all.

**Mr. Kaufman:** There are two kinds of Member. The first is like the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and the members of my party who opposed the bludgeoning through the House of the Single European Act. The second is like those in the Government who guillotined the Bill and now say that it is a piece of legislation which must be dumped as soon as possible in favour of subsidiarity, even though they cannot tell us what that is.

The Prime Minister does not seem to envisage or to understand that there are many occasions when action is most appropriate neither at the European level nor at the national level. Let me explain what I mean.

We all know that Lady Thatcher had the habit of carrying around her favourite texts which, at a moment's notice, she would whisk from her handbag—before she discovered the technological miracle of the compact disc. I offer the Prime Minister the free gift of a text to keep in his wallet next to his heart. It is a definition of true subsidiarity which reads:

"Decisions should be made at the level (European Community, national, regional or local) where the maximum democratic control and effectiveness is ensured."

That is a proper definition of subsidiarity. It is the Labour party's definition of subsidiarity, and it was devised and drafted by my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson).

As for enlargement——

**Mr. Cash:** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Kaufman:** I shall proceed a little further.

The Prime Minister made it clear that, for the United Kingdom presidency ending on 31 December, enlargement is little more than an academic issue. Although the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor have declared that enlargement is a key priority for the United Kingdom presidency, all that the Prime Minister could murmur on Monday was that during our presidency

"unofficial discussions . . . can take place".

Why? He went on to admit that the

"formal accession of any new state could not take place until after the Maastricht treaty is ratified."—[*Official Report*, 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 593.]

The Secretary of State for National Heritage has circulated an attractive booklet listing the events in the United Kingdom presidency's European arts festival, which includes such delights as the Ashington Eurofest, an international festival of pavement art in Liverpool and a special European children's programme featuring Ooly McDooly. I suggest that some traditional British nursery

rhymes should be added to the agenda. When the Prime Minister talks about the date of ratification of the Maastricht treaty, it is appropriate to quote

"'When will that be'? say the bells of Stepney"—

although I do not think that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) is in a tearing hurry. The response is, of course,

"'I'm sure I don't know', says the great bell of Bow."

Nobody knows when the Maastricht treaty will be ratified.

**Mr. Cash:** In the light of the right hon. Gentleman's brilliant definition of subsidiarity on behalf of the Labour party, can he explain how it is that Labour would be able to implement or, if it were ever in government, to introduce, the notion of a central bank? Would that not be wholly inconsistent with the definition that he has just given?

**Mr. Kaufman:** That has nothing to do with it. This is one of the rare moments when I believe that the Foreign Secretary gave a satisfactory reply to an intervention on that subject. I support the Foreign Secretary in that reply, because I want to do him the maximum damage with his Back Benchers.

The other insuperable obstacle to a productive United Kingdom presidency, is, of course, the uncertain fate of the Maastricht treaty. At the end of the Lisbon summit, the participants issued their communiqué, the conclusions of the presidency. It is 49 pages long and includes a section headed "State of the Ratification Procedure on the Treaty on European Union". It is a happy section; it is pleased with itself. It states:

"The European Council welcomes the result of the Irish referendum."

I am absolutely sure that there was another referendum, but the conclusions of the presidency—the document, the communiqué—does not refer to it in any way, and nor did the Prime Minister in his statement to the House on Monday. He came back from Lisbon and made a statement to the House but did not so much as mention the Danish referendum.

The European summit and the United Kingdom Prime Minister may regard the Danish referendum as something nasty on the pavement that it is best to walk gingerly round, but walk round it as they may, there it still lies —although one would never guess that from the Prime Minister's post-summit publicity.

After the Maastricht treaty the Prime Minister's publicity machine said that he had won hands down—game, set and match. It was a triumph. I do not know how long this country can go on surviving triumphs of that sort. The House will be surprised to learn that after Lisbon the word from No. 10 was that that was "another triumph for Major". After the miracle of Maastricht came the Lisbon story.

Hon. Members in the age group to which the Foreign Secretary and I belong may remember that famous British musical, "The Lisbon Story", featuring the beautiful Pat Kirkwood, and the hit song from it—"Pedro the Fisherman":

"Pedro the fisherman was always whistling such a merry call,
Girls who were passing by would hear him whistling by the harbour wall"—

presumably, for this purpose the term "girls" includes noble baronesses. The Prime Minister can whistle as much as he likes but, realistically, the tune cannot be very merry.

The programme for a promenade concert—it is on 14 August; get your tickets now—sums up the situation more accurately. That programme includes Mussorgsky's "Songs and Dances of Death", performed by the Danish national radio symphony orchestra.

Immediately after the Danish referendum the Government insisted that it would be business as usual for the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. The Foreign Secretary said that the Committee stage of the Bill would proceed. That afternoon the Committee stage was postponed——

**Mr. Hurd** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Kaufman:** I take great care to be accurate. I may have got it wrong last time, although I do not acknowledge that I did, but at least the Foreign Secretary admits that I have got it right this time—that is progress.

The Foreign Secretary said that it was made clear that afternoon, in a business statement that did not even mention the Bill, that its Committee stage would not proceed. We have not heard about it since.

This afternoon the Foreign Secretary said that we were in a period of pause. The right hon. Gentleman has a genius for turning understatement into an art form. No-one knows when the Committee stage will be resumed. The Prime Minister makes all kinds of noises about having given his word of honour, and being at the heart of Europe. But this week he has at long last publicly begun to come to terms with reality. Yesterday he said about the Bill:

"It would be desirable to finish it by the end of the year, but it is not essential."

In the House on Monday, he was even more specific. He said:

"We must wait to see . . . what action the Danish Government take . . . explaining to us how they intend to proceed with the ratification of the treaty. Once the Danish Government do that, we will be in a position to proceed with the ratification here."—[*Official Report*, 29 June; Vol. 210, c. 586.]

Even the Prime Minister now admits that it is pointless for the House to proceed with ratification until we can see a clear way forward from the Danish referendum. That is what Labour spokesmen have said ever since the referendum. The Bill is now inoperable, because so much of it refers to and requires participation by Denmark, and it would be improper to proceed with an inoperable Bill. That is why we have repeatedly asked for a report to the House on the situation following the Danish referendum, and why we have said that, if the Government do not show a clear way forward, yet still attempt to proceed with the Bill, we shall vote against any guillotine motion.

**Mr. Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): The right hon. Gentleman is making an entertaining speech, but will he make it clear where the Opposition now stand on the Maastricht treaty? Does the right hon. Gentleman hope that it will be ratified, and that the Danes will have second thoughts? Does he hope that the French will support it? He must have a view.

**Mr. Kaufman:** We made it clear in the debate when the Bill was introduced that we support a great deal of what is in the treaty which the Bill seeks to ratify. However, we take serious exception to some parts of the treaty—including the protocol which excludes us from the social chapter, among other things. If we could secure a treaty

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that met all our aspirations we should readily support it. Unfortunately, that is not what is before the House at this stage.

**Mr. John D. Taylor** (Strangford): We need further clarification of what the right hon. Gentleman has just said. He gave the House the impression that the Opposition would oppose the Bill if it were brought before the House again before Denmark made a decision. He then qualified that by saying that the Labour party would oppose the Bill only if a guillotine were presented. Which is it? Does the Labour party oppose the Bill in principle, or only if a guillotine is proposed?

**Mr. Kaufman:** There is a great deal of misapprehension, not about our attitude, which I shall state in the most specific terms, but about the parliamentary procedure before us. Unless the Government introduce the famous confidence motion that keeps being floated in and out of the No. 10 machine, there will be no voting for or against the Bill. If the Bill is resumed it will go into Committee. The Labour party will move a great many amendments in Committee, and we shall expect adequate time to be given to debate them. We shall decide our attitude to Third Reading on the basis of what is in the Bill after the Committee stage.

**Mr. Charles Kennedy** (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Kaufman:** No, I shall proceed now.

That is what the Committee stage is about—whether a Bill can be altered.

Our position is a great deal clearer than what the Government are telling us. They imply that there could be a painless—or even painful—formula that could solve the problem of the Bill for them. Soon after the referendum, the Foreign Office floated the idea that the United Kingdom presidency could patch things together with a protocol to the treaty. Clearly that had not been thought out, because when the Leader of the House, standing in for the Prime Minister, was questioned about the notion, he said that such a protocol was

"one of the possibilities which can clearly be considered, but without commitment at this stage."

It was

"one among a range of others that can sensibly be considered in the uncertain circumstances".—*[Official Report,* 9 June; Vol. 209, c. 143.]

There is a specific reply for us.

The possibility of the protocol was soon removed from sight, and as for that range of other possibilities to which the Leader of the House referred, nothing more was heard about them, whatever they may or may not have been—and a good thing too. This ailment cannot be cured by political quack medicine. It needs careful thought and sensible ideas.

There are ways of moving forward from the Danish referendum. Last week, the Danish Social Democratic party, which must play an indispensable role in any new moves for Danish ratification, advocated priorities including the strengthening of democracy and the promotion of employment and social justice. Such issues should be at the heart of the United Kingdom presidency. Sadly, they will not be. The Opposition believe that the objectives of the United Kingdom presidency should be enlargement and a much more specific effort to obtain agreement in principle on the admission of certain applicants. It is far too negative to say that enlargement should wait upon the ratification of Maastricht. Agreement in principle on admission of Sweden and Finland could well affect favourably the mood of the electorate of Denmark, who could see that their country would not be the lone Scandinavian country in the Community.

The Lisbon summit was far too negative on that subject and was even more unacceptably negative on the application of Cyprus. I am not satisfied with what the Foreign Secretary said today about that subject or with his ample references, once again, to the desirability of a stronger relationship with Turkey. It is quite wrong to say, as was said at the Lisbon summit, that consideration of the application by Cyprus must be postponed because the island is divided. That division exists because of an illegal occupation of part of Cyprus by Turkish forces. It is wrong to reward Turkey and penalise Cyprus because the latter is the victim of aggression by the former. The United Kingdom presidency should make it clear to Turkey that she will not be admitted to the Community as long as her troops are present in Cyprus against the will of the legal Government. It should proceed positively to consider the application by Cyprus for membership.

The United Kingdom presidency should make human rights a major theme of its term of office. The power and influence of the Community should be used to draw attention to and, where possible, remedy violations of human rights outside Europe—in Indonesia, Thailand, Burma and South Africa—and in Europe as well.

I should like an early declaration by the ministerial Council that no aid of any kind will be provided for Albania until that country ends the abomination of public hangings. Since the Secretary of State announced today that he will visit Tirana shortly, I hope that he will make clear to the regime our disgust at its barbaric public executions.

During the United Kingdom presidency, the Community should have, as a priority, agreement on positive policies for economic divergence—I mean convergence *[Interruption.]*—I mean both divergence and convergence. It should have agreement on those policies to strengthen the regions and to assist in the structural change of industry and in easing the process of industrial change.

The United Kingdom presidency should co-ordinate policies to fight unemployment. The Prime Minister was pitiful on Monday when he implied that the unemployment problem in this country was not as intolerable as it might be because it was getting worse in Spain. The Foreign Secretary was even more complacent yesterday when he had the nerve to warn against what he called

"abandoning people who are unemployed and looking for jobs"—*[Official Report,* 1 July 1992; Vol. 210, c. 838.]

It is the Government who have abandoned such people. We want the Community to remedy that callous neglect.

We call upon the Government to give real meaning to the social dimension. The Prime Minister was at his most astounding on Monday when he said:

"we agree with the social dimension, but we do not agree with the social charter itself."—*[Official Report,* 29 June 1992; Vol. 210, c. 584.]

That was like saying, "We agree with the principles of the ten commandments, but we can't go along with those

niggling bits about not making graven images, honouring thy father and thy mother, and not coveting thy neighbour's house, or wife, or ox or ass." The Government are seen to be alone in believing that the single market must be an adventure playground for capital without providing the necessary protections for employed and unemployed people. The Government are alone in Europe in rejecting the social chapter and the social charter. That attitude must change.

I say to the Prime Minister and to the Foreign Secretary that this is the last speech that I shall make from the Front Bench. I do not begrudge the Government their election victories, but I cannot forgive them for what they are doing to the thousands of poor in my constituency and in many other parts of the country who eke out an existence in poor housing, who are poorly clothed and who are far too often poorly fed. They have children whom they love as much as any hon. Member on either side loves his or her children. Yet they are unable to bring up their children in decent circumstances, in a decent environment, with any hope for the future or any hope of a job when they leave school. In their thousands they are unemployed, suffering one of the worst unemployment rates in the country.

The poor have to go to the Department of Social Security offices to beg for help, for money for a second-hand mattress or a second-hand cooker and, mostly, they are turned away. They are rejected for income support and they are rejected for crisis loans. They are excluded from the Prime Minister's classless society because they are too poor to claim membership of any class at all.

I intend to devote my time in this Parliament to fighting for all my constituents, but above all for the excluded poor. One reason why I shall fight for the inclusion of the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty is that it goes beyond windy generalisations about being at the heart of Europe and could provide practical help in putting heart into my constituents who, God knows, need it and have earned it.

The United Kingdom presidency should not be about logos and clichés—it should be about people. It should be about the common humanity of all the people in all the countries of the European Community. That is what a Labour presidency would have been about and that is what the Labour party will never give up fighting for.

5.36 pm

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) gets more and more entertaining as he gets demob happy and his party's position on this matter gets odder and odder and more and more confused. We have enjoyed some of his remarks, without agreeing with any of them. I salute his passing from his present position and look forward to him popping up in some other position in which he is rumoured to have an interest.

Those with longer memories will remember that the Maastricht treaty was born of a couple of intergovernmental conferences some two years ago, which the British Government did not like the idea of. However, there was nothing under the Community arrangements that we could use to stop them. We were severely criticised at the time and Britain was depicted as the laggard—the one against the 11, which all knew where they were going and where the intergovernmental conferences were taking us.

I propose to my right hon. Friends that we should use the presidency to turn the tables. We should take intellectual, philosophical and, in terms of ideas, total command of the future agenda of the Commuity. We should urge that, in due course, there should be another intergovernmental conference to begin to shape the kind of Europe that more and more people throughout Europe, including in this country, want to see—a Europe heading in a different direction from the one in which it appears to have gone in recent years.

I can suggest that proposal with confidence to my right hon. Friends because, as my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said with great eloquence, the whole debate has changed, even in the past few months. We are no longer judged as insular, ostrich-like Britain which is sitting glued to the station platform while the great and stately train of European unification rolls out to distant destinations. A completely different picture is now emerging, just as a photograph in a dark room gradually takes form. We can see a pattern emerging that puts the development of Europe in a different context.

Instead of the decentralisers and those who are suspicious of too much unity and centralisation being the laggards, it is the centralisers who are the past and the decentralisers who are the futuure. That changes the context of the debate, because it is no longer fair or correct to suggest that those who held back from the higher flown rhetoric of Maastricht were lingering in the past while the centralisers were the future; it is now the other way round.

The old vocabulary about momentum; of not just ironing out the level playing field, but flattening every detail of the variety and diversity of the European Community to total billiard table smoothness; the calls for trains leaving stations, for social cohesion to the point of redistribution to the extent of destroying the wealth-creating momentum of Europe and the calls for superconvergence—they have all acquired a sepia tint. They have become the language of the past and my right hon. Friends deserve immense credit for spotting that before most people in Europe and, in their negotiations on the Maastricht treaty, for bringing out the trend for the future and rejecting the trend of the past.

If we apply the new template to the Maastricht treaty text as it is before us, with the derogations secured by my right hon. Friends, it is clear that parts belong to the centralist past. They are old-fashioned and contain the old-fashioned language. However, there are also parts that belong to a much more vigorous and diversified future They offer strength through diversity and diffusion. That strength will make Europe a far more effective force than the old centralising shibboleths and nostrums of the centralisers.

One example of that is the single currency, to which my right hon. Friends have not committed us. Another is the single central bank. A single currency may not be necessary for a single common market. Mr. Feldstein said in *The Economist* the other week that it might actually slow down and undermine the growth of trade and prosperity in the Community.

There has been discussion today about excise and sales taxes. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken a strong and determined stand about that. As my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) so characteristically and perceptively said, we need only consider the United States, which is the greatest, most successful and oldest single market in the world, to

*[Mr. David Howell]*

discover a vast variety of sales taxes and encouragement for people to trade across state borders and take advantage of the differences and variety in those taxes.

There has also been much talk about the single bank. The concept of a single, monolithic, physical institution running Europe's monetary policy is antique. Europe's monetary policy in future is bound to be multi-centred. A single bank does not belong to the modern world. I have the same doubts about the single passport, which, alas, has already been implemented and which has nothing to do with the Maastricht treaty.

It is not technically necessary to have the single burgundy passport for everyone, although the technicians tell us that it is. Electronics could cope with all control matters and we could retain separate documents that would give us more of a feeling of identity.

While we are considering the different aspects of the Maastricht treaty, we might question the repeated concept of the level playing field. Policing the single market is very important. Whatever some of my hon. Friends who are opposed to the Community and all its works say, such policing will require a good deal of political clout being delegated to the Community and its institutions. However, policing the single market to the point where obsessive economists begin to insist that to create a single market it is necessary to itemise everything down to the part of the year at which one may kill a magpie to stop it robbing birds' nests, or set vocational training or any other absurd detail, carries us well out of the realms of practical commerce and into the realms of economic levelling and ideology on a scale to which it would be right to call a halt.

That overkill brings the single market into disrepute. It is the role of responsible European policy makers—at the head of whom I place my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer—in the coming presidency to rescue Europe and the single market, which is a magnificent goal, from the Europhobes and the Euro-fanatics.

**Mr. Giles Radice** (Durham, North): We have heard many fine words about decentralisation from the right hon. Gentleman. One would have no idea from what he said that the United Kingdom is the most centralised state in the European Community.

**Mr. Howell:** In respect of subsidiarity, that means that each country does things in a way that it believes best.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Howell:** No, I do not want to delay the House.

With regard to regionalisation, we must work out our own patterns for the future. They need not necessarily be the same as those occupied by the German lander or the other provincial schemes elsewhere in Europe. Let us do our own thing in our own way. We should work out our own problems. I see no difficulty with that.

As I said, overkill on the scale that has confronted us brings the ideal of the single market into disrepute. There are those who argue—I hear them behind me now—that in the light of the present situation, the best course is to tear up the Maastricht treaty and start again. I agree that it makes no sense—my right hon. Friends recognise this very correctly—to press on immediately with the parliamentary process. We have had the Second Reading of the Bill associated with the treaty which, in effect, was a preliminary ratification. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right to say that we should wait and see how others handle the matter. I fully support that policy.

Given Britain's presidency and its towering position of intellectual strength—*[Laughter.]* Labour Members may laugh, but that is the laughter of the past. They are the people who want to centralise and control in the socialists' interests the affairs of this country from Brussels. That is not the pattern of Europe's future.

Given the powerful instruments that are built into the Maastricht treaty, it seems pointless to throw away Britain's hand when we hold the trumps. I believe that it would be wiser to concentrate on changing the whole tempo and vocabulary of the European process by setting out boldly both the new vision of a modern and enlarged Europe of nations and the path by which to attain it.

We need to promote a Europe of nation states. We need a positive plan of reform of the institutions and that lies in the future. We need to review the Commission's role. We need to list the functions to be returned to the nation states. That process of listing should be carried out by the nation states. In effect, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was pointing rightly in that direction, a bonfire of regulations and directives——

**Mr. Cash:** And of vanities.

**Mr. Howell:** —indeed, and of vanities—so that we may give the Europe of the future consistency and strength instead of over-centralised fragility and brittleness. We need to redefine the philosophy of the single market. We do not need to flatten everything to create a single market. We need diversity and variety in taxation and many other things for a single market to work.

We must also redefine cohesion. It is not true that all aid creates development. Aid can stop development both within and outside of the Community. We should go all out for enlargement, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that is right. We should limit the ambitions of the budgeteers in Brussels. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will do that.

We should halt the potential merging of foreign policy into a common EC foreign policy. That is not a worthwhile ambition. There will be problems with joint declarations. We may make joint declarations with the rest of the Community, but in many other areas we will want to pursue with other interested powers—perhaps the United States in some cases or Germany and France in others—our own particular policy interests. That pillar of foreign policy co-operation must not be allowed to be merged into the trunk of the Community. There are tendencies at work that could easily do that and we must guard against them.

That is our agenda for the presidency. It not only deals with today's problems but captures the commanding heights of the ideas when we come to the next intergovernmental conference, because today's ideas shape tomorrow's decisions. If we want to win on those decisions, we must get on with this business now.

5.49 pm

**Mr. John Morris** (Aberavon): No one should underestimate the opportunity that the British presidency provides for us. We can influence a wide range of subjects. The holder of the chair is an important cog in the machinery of the European Community. I am fairly sure that I am the only Opposition Member who has actually chaired a meeting of the Council of Ministers—the Employment and Social Committee. I fear that my tenure was of one session and one session alone, but my achievement was to get through the business at a reasonable hour—half-past 9, as against the expectation of an all-night sitting. My experience in the House considerably sharpened my mind.

The issue about which I wish to speak briefly is the real and perceived democratic deficit in the EC. The further one goes from Westminster or, more accurately, the further one goes from all of us who inhabit this Palace, the greater the distrust of the European Community. I suspect that it is the same in other countries. The cognoscenti, the mandarins and the mandarin class have always been in favour of the EC, but I suspect that people generally feel less sure. What has bedevilled popular support for the European Community is the impression that it is a meddler, and a meddler unnecessarily, and that, with its inflated bureaucracy, it has pursued uniformity for uniformity's sake and intruded into matters of minor importance when it was not necessary so to do.

I suspect that that feeling had a great influence on the referendum in Denmark. It did not do so in Ireland, obviously, because every man, woman and child there is a major beneficiary. It is almost like going to the opera at Covent Garden when a great part of the bill is met by the Treasury—in this case, the EC. Of course, the Danish referendum is a chance for all of us to stand back and take stock. The people of Denmark, outside the capital of Copenhagen, feared what they had seen, and they feared as much if not more the sounds then coming from the Commission. There has been a remarkable—a touch of democracy can be quite salutary—change in the tone of Mr. Delors since that fateful watershed. The truth is—we all accept it—that the treaty is juridically dead; it is in tatters until and unless there is popular approval in Denmark.

The lesson is that lectures on what is good for us by the great and good either in this country or elsewhere are not necessarily welcomed. Indeed, it is frequently the reverse —otherwise, we in this country might have been governed by a combination of civil service mandarins of Whitehall, heads of our great colleges, holders of the sees of Canterbury and York and, for good measure, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland. That is not how democracy should run.

During negotiations it looked as though the democratic deficit would be tackled by reducing the Commission's powers and by giving the European Parliament an enhanced role in the legislative process. That has not happened and there have not been many significant changes in the Commission's role. Article 8 of the treaty that set up the Commission states:

"It shall be the duty of the high authority to ensure that the objectives set out in this treaty are attained in accordance with the provisions thereof."

Flowing from that are the treaty provisions for achieving and implementing that high aim.

I do not know of any organ of government in any democratic country that has been given so many powers to initiate and propose, an appointed, non-elected, almost faceless organ. I should like to know of a parallel. The inevitable result is that such an institution will gather a momentum of its own. It has done so, and it has sought to increase its influence. Each Commissioner in turn, with varying competence and success, has sought to put a stamp of significant change on his own period of office in his own sphere. That is a perfectly normal human aspiration—indeed, collectively it is the aim of the Commission. But is it necessary for the Commission to have such a life of its own? Is it because of that life of its own that it has meddled unnecessarily and certainly failed to capture greater public support in this country and elsewhere?

When the total membership was six, an additional engine of power in the centre may have been necessary, but now that we are part of a larger body—I hope that Her Majesty's Government will continue their campaign for enlargement, perhaps up to 20 members or so—more initiatives should come from the European Parliament and the Council of Minister, and the role of the Commission should be diminished. That is where the balance should be. Ministers, individually and collectively, are much more likely to be politically sensitive than appointees, however eminent. The greater the membership of the EC, the greater the need for political sensitivity, and that is why we should meet and tackle head-on the democratic deficit.

I regret that the European Parliament has not been given more powers. If being a Member of the European Parliament is to mean anything, it must be given those powers. If decisions in Brussels and Strasbourg are to be accepted, the institution of the European Parliament is ready at hand to provide the appearance, and, I hope, the substance, of popular support. It would then be much easier to accept whatever edict flows from Brussels or Strasbourg.

Against the background of Maastricht, of planned economic and monetary union—I for one have grave doubts about the speed and direction in which we are heading—there must be popular support. If people believe that there is popular support, they should be ready to put it to the test. I certainly would not dissent from having a referendum on the issue.

A common foreign and security policy would be light years from obtaining popular support. Some of our European partners did not come out well in the Gulf war. I remember the dilatory and unhelpful attitude of the Belgians in demanding their pound of flesh for ammunition; it left a sour taste. Also, the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, no doubt an inestimable gentleman, strutting across the world's stage, speaking on behalf of Europe, certainly did not inspire confidence. I rushed to compare the size of the population of Luxembourg with some of the units of government in south Wales, and I thought that some of our civic leaders in the Principality might have done a better job. Certainly they would have had more democratic credibility.

The lesson is that Buggin's turn might be all right when we discuss technical matters, but in matters of earth-shattering importance it certainly does not go down well. If low intensity economic activity has already caused anxiety about the manner and extent of implementation, how much more anxiety will there be when one pauses to consider the canvas post-Maastricht?

*[Mr. John Morris]*

The logic of subsidiarity necessitates a complete rethink of the role of the Commission. Is it necessary in its present form? How many of its responsibilities could be carried out by the Council of Ministers, its own semi-permanent national Ministers or our own civil service permanent representatives? Is it not time to consider that possibility? I believe that we should do so.

I was glad to hear some of the earlier comments in the debate. In our presidency we should ruthlessly examine each and every decision taken in the past by the Commission. I welcomed the suggestion that I heard just now of a bonfire. I would welcome a bonfire of the decisions of the past which were not strictly necessary to the well-being and good government of Europe. Any examination should be of not only future but past decisions. If the concept of subsidiarity is to mean anything, there should certainly be retrospective examination.

The philosophy for the future should be the minimum of centralisation in decision-making unless it is seen to carry public approval and the repatriation of a raft of activities which so far have been carried out in Brussels or Strasbourg. Subsidiarity will mean the transfer of power to the elected assemblies of Scotland and Wales in due course and to the organs of regional and local government in Britain. That would leave the Commission, or whatever body succeeded it, to concentrate on activities which are essential to the well-being and common good of all member states. The Commission will certainly undertake new activities, but it should become involved only in essential matters.

I am sick and tired of the criticism levelled at Britain whatever Government are in power. If we object to a proposal in Europe, it is said that we are anti-communautaire. That is nonsense. We have a national interest and a European interest. We are entitled to fight our corner without being regarded as anti-European. We can be as good Europeans as the next man in the next country and yet oppose a proposal. But that criticism is always thrown in our faces if we object to anything that is discussed in Europe. That was certainly my experience.

There are other matters in which we have a particular interest, but there is no time to go into them now. During our presidency we can wield a great deal of power. It is an important period in the life of Britain and of Europe. I hope that we can make real advances in repatriating so many decisions which have unnecessarily been taken at the centre when that was not in the interests of the well-being of Europe.

6.3 pm

**Mr. Peter Brooke** (City of London and Westminster, South): The Venerable Bede, one of the ancestors of contemporary Europe, gave a vivid image of a bird's flight through the windows of a hall to illustrate the life of man. The European Community owes its origins to what happened in the middle of this century and I dare say that it will still be evolving in the middle of the next. Against that sweep of history, our current six-month presidency is as the flight of the bird to the Venerable Bede.

However, the century of building which I foreshadow is not unlike the building of that most European of institutions, a cathedral. Cathedrals grow sometimes slowly, sometimes fast. While under construction the ground site is often more of a builders' yard, rent with builders' language, than a place of God. Yet the purpose is always clear and the outcome is always remarkable.

In this building, whether of cathedrals or of Europe, nothing is more important than that the foundations should be sound. No national contribution to that aspect has been more important than that of Britain. The great Sam Rayburn of Texas once said that the three wisest words in the English language were, "Wait a minute." In the past 15 years, my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher has deserved well of all of us in Europe by reiterating those three words again and again. My right hon. Friends who are now in charge of decisions on Europe have been wholly faithful disciples to her in preventing the Euro-rhetoric of others from interrupting the soundness of the foundations that are needed.

In this brief speech, I wish to remark on a single chapel in the great cathedral. I confess instantly that I am motivated by constituency interest. In the six months of our presidency of the European Community, the Community is committed to resolving the location and site of the European monetary institute and the European central bank. It is a subject in which the City of London is profoundly and properly interested.

On 3 June my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) had an Adjournment debate to which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, who is present on the Treasury Bench, replied. My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove rehearsed in splendid detail the scale of the dominance of the City of London as a financial centre over its continental rivals and on a global basis. Given that the facts and statistics are, in the words beloved of certain Departments, "on the record", I do not propose to reiterate them today, especially on an occasion when time is as gold dust. I remark in parentheses that gold dust is but one of the commodities in which the City provides Europe's dominant market.

I wish to use these few moments to remind the House of London's European pedigree. It goes through the Lombards, who gave us so much of our current banking language; through the Hanseatic League where the Hansards resident in the Steelyard on what is now Cannon Street station were otherwise known as Easterlings, a word thought to have given rise to sterling; through the first chartered company—not involved with the East Indies, the Levant, Africa, Hudson's Bay or the Falkland Islands —the Muscovy company; through the sacking of Antwerp in 1576 by the Duke of Parma, which gave us our first opportunity for entrepot and third-country trading; to the serried European names of London's merchant bankers such as Hambro, Lazard, Schroder, Rothschild, Kleinwort and Warburg.

Those cosmopolitan and maritime origins bred London's willingness to trade in all risks. It is that willingness which my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove described so eloquently and so significantly on 3 June and which gave rise to London's supremacy in financial circles.

Of course, in the City of London we are, above all, realists. I realise that, although the technical arguments are strong, the decision might go against London on political grounds. In that case, it would be odd if the new institutions went to Germany, where the Bundesbank is so vehement in its rejection of political considerations and interference. There would be a particular retrograde

disadvantage if the institutions went wholly to Germany. It would mean that German rather than English would become the language of operations. That suggests that the operating arm of the bank should be in London, not least because no EC institution is yet in London. Nothing would seem more suitable for London than a financial institution, especially one specifically dealing with financial operations and markets.

Against this background, Her Majesty's Government have an obvious and particular role to play during our presidency in determining the location of the European financial institutions along the lines which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary so encouragingly described in the Adjournment debate on 3 June. That would be to the ultimate benefit of all the people of Europe. It should go without saying that the Corporation of the City of London and the City's other institutions will be happy to reciprocate that support by the amplest of co-operation.

6.9 pm

**Mr. Charles Kennedy** (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall not follow too directly the speech of the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), but I think that it is significant that the case that he made so eloquently, with his characteristic use of vocabulary and imagery, has been all but lost, if not already lost, for this country. The technical and technological aspects of a central European bank have been lost, not just to London, but to other parts of the United Kingdom. I am thinking of Edinburgh and the "diversity"—to use the word of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell)—of practical banking arrangements that would go with the central European bank. The success of those diverse activities would spread to other parts of the United Kingdom

Perhaps it is a reflection of my political party background, but I tend to believe that every cloud has a silver lining. That being so, I hope that we can view the referendum in Denmark in that way. It has given everyone in the European Community time to pause and think, which must be a good thing. There is no doubt that the politicians and bureaucrats were running ahead of the citizens of the European Community in terms of the developments that were taking place. The problem is that the rallying cry now is "subsidiarity"—not the most potent of words around which to gain momentum. I think that the Foreign Secretary acknowledged that the other day.

The Government have adopted the correct political stance since the Danish referendum, and are continuing to do so. The British presidency will have to be cautious and painstaking, and the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Foreign Secretary are three individuals who are well equipped to take precisely such a detailed and sensible approach. We want to take Denmark with us if possible, not leave it isolated. I pay tribute to the fact that those three politicians have consistently stressed that.

However, there are uncertainties about the time scale, and they have not been helped by the Foreign Secretary's remarks today or the Prime Minister's remarks following the Lisbon summit at the weekend. He seemed to suggest —to use a phrase that he has hitherto used of Scotland and is now applying to Denmark—that the Government would take stock of the situation and decide by the end of the summer, at about the time the House returns from the recess. I notice that the Leader of the House is now in the Chamber.

It is not clear whether the Government will introduce a Bill to be discussed in Committee before the end of the year. One suspects that they are hanging back on that decision until they have seen what happens in the French referendum and events in Denmark are more clearly established, but the sense of uncertainty is unhelpful.

Similarly unhelpful were the comments of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) about what the Labour party might do as and when the Bill reappears. The Labour party's strategy was as clear as mud. We have substantial misgivings and disappointments about some aspects of the Maastricht treaty and would like it to have gone much further. However, when the Bill eventually comes before the House on Third Reading and the definitive vote is taken, we shall support it, as it is the best on offer. As believers in advancing towards a more integrated Community and, we hope, ultimately a more federal one, we think that the Bill offers the best prospect at present. I am sorry that the Labour party's views on that issue are not equally clear. Its attitude will not help the political process over the coming months.

**Mr. Stephen Milligan** (Eastleigh): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, talking of the Danish referendum, he said that politicians and bureaucrats were running ahead of the people, when his party advocates a more federal Europe and believes that the treaty should have gone further?

**Mr. Kennedy:** The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are also advocating a referendum. Therefore, although we have a clear wish and intention on how we would like Europe to develop, and how we see this country's role in it, we believe that the question should ultimately be put to the people at the ballot box. We could then argue our case for this country; if we can persuade people to agree with us, so be it. Even if we do not succeed, it is healthier for Europe if the public are able to have a direct say on the subject.

I should like to return to the speech of the right hon. Member for Gorton, and perhaps the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) will intervene. The time scale suggested by the right hon. Member for Gorton was unfortunate. I followed his speech with care until I heard the unmistakable sound of the clock striking 13. When he seemed to argue that, if Finland and Sweden entered the Community—presumably, by the end of the calendar year in time for a Hogmanay party—Denmark might be favourably disposed to ratify the Maastricht treaty early next year. I do not know how frenetic a pace of diplomatic activity the right hon. Gentleman thinks there will be over the next six months, but it is stretching credibility beyond all known bounds to suppose that Finland and Sweden will enter the Community within the next six months. I do not think that the Government are seriously exploring that option.

The Maastricht treaty follows logically from the Single European Act. That is why it is strange that the Joan of Arc cum rottweiler, who has been set loose in the House of Lords today, takes such exception to the treaty. She was the one who, as Head of Government, pushed the Bill

*[Mr. Kennedy]*

through with a guillotine and a three-line Whip and curtailed discussion of it. If she is looking for someone to blame, she should look in the mirror.

Whatever the treaty's shortcomings, such as opt-out clauses and inadequate internal European democracy, if one takes the Thatcherite critique of bureaucracy in Europe—some of which I agree with—there is a logical corollary. The natural consequence is surely that more power should be given to the European Parliament to ensure more accountability. I do not think that it is more democratic to try to achieve that on an intergovernmental basis—the policy to which the Government presently adhere.

I hope that during the next six months sterling will come into the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism. Perhaps in the autumn a White Paper will be presented on an independent Bank of England, and perhaps the single market will be completed to benefit this country, as well as our trading compatriots and competitors.

The Maastricht treaty is positive in that it establishes the basis of a common citizenship across Europe. When one considers the widening of Europe—the enlargement on which the Prime Minister places such stress—we see the problem that the Government created for themselves at the Lisbon summit on the issue of linked cohesion funds. That issue will not be finally settled until the Edinburgh summit at the end of the year.

The Government must acknowledge the suspicion of some of the other European countries that the British adherence to enlargement as a way forward is also because they view it as a braking mechanism to slow down the pace of existing Community integration, which is unfortunate. If the Government are serious about enlargement, they cannot continue to set their face against additional cohesion funds to make enlargement worth while and economically possible for the poorer states in the Community.

The Foreign Secretary touched on the issue of subsidiarity. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) is saying somewhere else today, subsidiarity is the flip side of federalism. In a recent radio interview, the Foreign Secretary was decent enough to acknowledge that federalism means different things to different people in different parts of Europe. I bemoan the fact that, in this country, federalism has become associated with a mythical super-state in which Jacques Delors and various unaccountable bureaucrats impose foreign designs on Britain.

Our view of federalism is much more in line with mainstream European thinking—that federalism involves the very diversity of power and structures mentioned by the right hon. Member for Guildford. We would like it to go further. I do not understand how subsidiarity can stop at the English channel or how its logic can be denied within the United Kingdom, whether with regard to Northern Ireland, Wales, the regions of England or to Scotland, which is my concern, as the Minister will understand.

We want an end to existing divergence and the establishment of commonality throughout the Community with regard to the voting system that will be used for the next set of European elections, and I am sorry that the Foreign Secretary did not mention that. Within the United Kingdom we have conceded the principle of proportional representation for European elections, in Northern Ireland. Why is that not being extended to other parts of the United Kingdom? I hope that the Chancellor will refer to that in his winding-up speech.

The next intergovernmental conference in 1996 will discuss the Community's development to the end of the century and beyond. One suspects that many of the issues touched on by the Foreign Secretary will still be on the agenda then. Prior to any greater enlargement of the Community, and any IGC of the type that led to Maastricht, surely there is a case for a wider European convention to consider the democracy of Europe, the enlargement of Europe, the development of a future foreign policy for Europe and all the rest. There should be a convention to attempt to bring policy closer to the peoples of Europe and perhaps to test any decisions that have been reached by a Europe-wide referendum.

On referendums, the Prime Minister has upped the temperature in the past week on securing the success of the Maastricht Bill. He is right to do so and I want the Bill to get through. However, in this House, perhaps as a result of parliamentary pressure exerted in another place, it may be politically unwise for the Government to set their faces completely against a referendum, if they want the Bill to get on to the statute book. It would be far better to concede a referendum than to lose the Bill, if the arithmetic proves to be that tight later this year.

**Mr. George Robertson** (Hamilton) *rose*——

**Mr. Kennedy:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will clarify Labour's policy on the matter and we shall find out exactly how tight the arithmetic will be.

**Mr. Robertson:** No, I am going to ask the hon. Gentleman to clarify one interesting issue. Last December, the Liberal Democrats were in favour of the social policy opt-out in the Maastricht treaty. In their general election manifesto, they said that they were against a social policy opt-out. Now they do not seem to have any views on the matter. In December, the leader of the Liberal Democrats called for a referendum; in the general election manifesto, which was one of the longest and fanciest that the party has produced, there was not one word about a referendum. Here we are in July and they are again in favour of one. Why all that moving around in between?

**Mr. Kennedy:** I do not think that there has been as much movement as the hon. Gentleman suggests. If any hon. Member is interested, I believe that back copies of our manifesto are available and I may be able to get them at a knock down price.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** You can get them all at bargain basement prices.

**Mr. Kennedy:** Knocked down, if not dragged out.

I referred earlier to our disappointment with the British opt-outs on monetary union and the social dimensions. We have also had reservations about aspects of those, which the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has heard our party leader express in this House and elsewhere. On his second point, it does not matter whether the referendum appeared in the manifesto, because we have always said that a post-legislative referendum on measures that involve constitutional change is the sensible course of action. That was the case in 1975, with the

renegotiation of our original entry in to the then Common Market by the Labour Government, and on Welsh and Scottish devolution in 1979. That is an effective and sensible way forward.

If the Government are going to the edge—and the parliamentary arithmetic is tight—I hope that they will not go over the edge and take the Maastricht Bill with them, by resisting the case for a referendum, should it be tabled in an amendment.

The Foreign Secretary began by discussing the tragedy of Yugoslavia. Should I describe the right hon. Member for Guildford as the former Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs?

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): As the Chairman of the former Select Committee.

**Mr. Kennedy:** I thank my hon. Friend. The Chairman of the former Foreign Affairs Select Committee said that he would prefer Europe to develop its foreign policy through intergovernmental arrangements, rather than some super imposed blueprint. I hope that I do him justice by paraphrasing.

We cannot have it both ways. There is no point in railing about the perceived failings of a European response to an issue as important and far-reaching as Yugoslavia within the European perimeter of influence, while denying the institutional mechanisms of an emergent foreign policy that would assist this country and other European states to have a more collective and coherent response to such issues. That is why we believe that, ultimately, denial of the logic of more pooling of sovereignty and what follows from it, will be unsustainable.

We hope, therefore, that there will be political, social and economic progression for Europe and this country's role within it, during the next six months, along the lines that I sketched out. We hope that the Community continues to be a bulwark of prosperity and peace on this planet, and that the Europe which emerges by the end of the century will be fully liberal and fully democratic, as those are the best political traditions on which it should evolve.

6.26 pm

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): I have the honour to address the House for the first time, and to represent the interests of the people of Mid-Staffordshire. I follow in the footsteps of two Members of Parliament. My immediate predecessor was Sylvia Heal, who sat on the Opposition Benches. She made history with the largest swing to the Labour party since the 1930s. Many people in the House and in the constituency found her a charming person. When she was elected, she said that it was the death knell of the poll tax, and she was right.

I also follow in the footsteps of John Heddle, a man whom many of us remember. He first entered the House in 1979, as the Member for Lichfield and Tamworth, and then became the first Member of Parliament for my constituency following the boundary changes in 1983. John Heddle was well loved in the House—I think on both sides—and he is certainly still loved in Mid-Staffordshire, and well remembered. His spirit lives on.

Mid-Staffordshire is an odd shaped constituency. It is approximately 34 miles long and four miles wide; it follows the Trent valley; and it is shaped rather like a fruit; I like to refer to it as my very own banana republic. It starts with Lichfield in the south, which is a unique city in Great Britain. It is a popular tourist town and has a unique cathedral with three towers. I know that it is the only cathedral in the United Kingdom with three towers; and the only other cathedral like it in the world is in Cologne. I believe that it is also unique in having two gold maces. Lichfield has spawned many famous sons—Dr. Johnson, David Garrick, and Erasmus Darwin.

Moving further north in my constituency, we come to the industrial towns of Rugeley and Armitage, which is famous in this place and throughout the world for its toilet ware. The market town of Stone is further north and serves many of the surrounding villages.

Last Friday I went to a Petertide festival in my constituency in a little village called Hixton, where Britain's entry into Europe was being celebrated. I went into the church, and children from the local primary school were busy singing songs from different parts of Europe—from England, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Greece. In doing so they reflected the myriad different forms of culture and style that we enjoy as a part of Europe. I have, however, a great fear, a great apprehension, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be able to reassure me in winding up that we are not heading down a road towards a European super-state.

Before I was elected to this place, I travelled the world selling radio studio systems and other electronics equipment; I travelled extensively throughout Europe, Africa, the Far East and the Soviet Union. I was particularly interested in life in the former Soviet Union. There, despite all the power of the KGB, despite having a single language forced on its peoples, and despite having a single legal system, the country fell apart. We see as well what is happening in Yugoslavia, and even in Czechoslovakia, which has a democratic tradition; there too the country is divided.

I believe that if we are heading, as I hope we are not, towards a European super-state, a political union, it is doomed to failure, whether it happens in one year, five years, 10 years or 50 years. I believe that a super-state would be intrinsically unstable and would explode at some time, at great cost to the peoples living in Europe.

I congratulate my right hon. Friends on the introduction of the concept of subsidiarity in the Maastricht treaty. That concept is the very bedrock of our statehood and our sovereignty. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to reassure me that the bones of subsidiarity will be built upon and that before we adopt the Maastricht treaty, or any other similar treaty, there will be some form of codicil to the treaty—I do not know how it can be done—which will clearly define, not through examples, but legally, irrevocably and unambiguously, what we understand, and what I hope our 11 partners understand, to be the meaning of subsidiarity so that there can be no doubt. I believe that, if that could be done, there would be tremendous support for the treaty, with its additional codicil, from Members on both sides of the House.

I believe that the single market, too, is something that we must build upon, and that the considerable strengths, personality and ability of Jacques Delors should be directed to that particular sphere. I can tell the House from my own experience that it is easier to sell to countries such as Norway, Kenya or Indonesia, which are not members of the European community, than it is to sell into the

*[Mr. Michael Fabricant]*

European Community, because of the huge weight of paperwork that is still involved in selling from country to country. We must try to eradicate this.

We see European law regarding environmental protection coming into force and on the whole it seems to be rigorously enforced more or less equally throughout the 12 states. I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Front Bench, because there is also an imbalance caused by the fact that in some of the member states of the European Community there are subsidies in the form of tax breaks or grants to help companies get through the transition period, with the heavy costs that are involved in refurbishing their plants to meet environmental directives. I hope that we too can do something to assist our industry, to ensure that there is a level playing field.

I recognise that we have adopted the Single European Act. We are signatories, in effect, to the treaty of Rome. But it is my great hope that we will not become a lost, far-flung outpost of a new Roman empire.

6.36 pm

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It falls to me to be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) on a truly admirable maiden speech. He has pleased the House, I believe, in many ways, but first because he has paid a very generous and well-deserved tribute to both his predecessors: to Sylvia Heal, for whom the Opposition in particular have affection and who I know is also greatly respected by the rest of the House; and to John Heddle, her predecessor, who was a well-respected, well-liked Member of the House.

The hon. Gentleman has also done right by his constituency. He has paid a tribute to his constituents and illustrated the diversity of his constituency. Indeed, he has convinced me that it is indeed a unique place, not only because Lichfield produced Dr. Johnson and Garrick, but also because the hon. Gentleman witnessed there a celebration of the entry into Europe of the United Kingdom. That really was a unique occasion—certainly one that I have not come across in the whole of my political life.

The third thing on which I want to congratulate the hon. Gentleman is the seriousness of what he had to say to the Government about a European super-state. He is quite right to ask for reassurance that we are not heading in that direction, and he is absolutely correct when he says that the ultimate lunacy for this country would be to end up as an outpost of a new Roman empire. We are a country that has enjoyed its independence longer than any other country in Europe and we must maintain that independence until the end of time.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and hope that we shall hear from him again on many occasions.

In the debate I have been struck by the optimism with which Government Members have looked upon the situation in the European Community as we take on their presidency. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) was being very optimistic indeed when he spoke of the intellectual supremacy that the decentralisers had gained in the debate, and his vision of a future in which all centralising tendencies have been not only checked but reversed. I hope that that will prove to be so, but it is very premature to say that it has been achieved.

The Government have also been extremely optimistic about the major item on their agenda: the widening of the membership of the European Community. I believe that the Danish referendum has brought the European juggernaut to a stop. The Maastricht treaty cannot be enacted because under article 236 of the treaty of Rome, any amendment to the Rome treaty requires unanimity. The precise words are that it can come into force only

"after being ratified by all the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

We know what the constitutional requirements are in the country of Denmark.

The Community's reaction—and I do not entirely exclude the Government from this, certainly at the highest levels—has been to try to circumvent the issue—my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the shadow Foreign Minister, used the rather vivid metaphor about messes on the pavement—to avoid and skirt round it altogether, or to pretend, as many in the rest of the Community do, that what happened in Denmark did not happen at all.

I was worried by certain words in the Lisbon communiqué right at the beginning which touched on that very matter. It read:

"the European Council underlines the importance of respecting the timetable laid down for ratification to ensure"—

and then the words:

"in any case the entry into force of the Treaty as of January 1st 1993."

What do those words "in any case" mean—entry into force as of 1 January "in any case". That may be simply a slip, it may be bluff, or it may contain an implicit threat. I hope that it is not an implicit threat and I hope that we can have the Minister's complete assurance of that, emphasising what in part the Foreign Secretary said earlier—that the British Government have no intention whatever of seeking to circumvent article 236 of the Rome treaty and going ahead in some new way to try to achieve the goals of the Maastricht treaty, as it were without the Danes.

The Danes have also had the effect of greatly reducing the prospects of early enlargement. I know that informal negotiations can take place—that is obvious—but, as the presidency conclusion put it:

"the official negotiation will be opened immediately after the Treaty on European union is ratified and the agreement has been achieved on the Delors two package."

Both those things must be put into place before the formal negotations can take place and the desired enlargement will follow.

We must recognise that enlargement may well have to wait a long time. The Danes are in no mood to change their minds. I had the opportunity of being in Copenhagen last weekend and talking to those who played some part in the referendum campaign. They told me, and I have no doubt that it is correct, that the latest polls in Denmark show that if there were to be a referendum now not just over 50 per cent. would vote no but 60 per cent. or more. There has already been a shift of opinion in favour of the position that has been taken up.

That is interesting because it has occurred despite the many threats that were brought to bear against the Danes during the referendum campaign. They were threatened with a loss of jobs, their possible expulsion from the

Community and the arresting of the flow of investment and subsidies under the CAP. Mr. Delors himself gave tongue to some of those threats about agricultural support and subsidies. All those threats were there, but they did not make the Danes vote yes.

Now that those threats have been shown to be bluff, I think that we shall find that the Danes will maintain their position, and maintain it strongly, for a considerable period ahead until some major changes have been made either to the treaty as it affects Denmark or in the treaty itself.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** My right hon. Friend has probably just answered the point, but I was about to ask him to recall the Foreign Secretary's words in opening the debate when he said that the Danish Government have asked for more time. For what does my right hon. Friend think that the Danish Government want more time?

**Mr. Shore:** I think that they are puzzled and perplexed about what they should do now. They cannot go back to their electorate and say that the electorate have got it wrong, that they miscounted or did not listen carefully enough to what Mr. Delors was saying. There must be some reason for having a second referendum. That reason must come from a carefully drawn Danish protocol which exempts them from those provisions in the Maastricht treaty to which they must object, or there must be some more general reconsideration of the Maastricht treaty.

It is no good us putting our heads in the sand and saying that all those things can be brought about quickly and that the process of the Community's enlargement can go full speed ahead. It cannot, for the reasons that I quoted. Maastricht must first be signed and ratified by all the countries, and that cannot take place for at least a year. If anyone is thinking of serving up again the European Communities (Amendment) Bill without the Danes having had a chance to reconsider their views, they are simply asking for trouble and they will be wasting the time of the House of Commons.

What the Danes have done is to give everyone in the Community, not just themselves, a chance to reconsider the Maastricht treaty and to think carefully about just what the governing elites have committed them to in the terms of the Maastricht treaty.

Is it not fascinating to see that in Germany the almost immediate reaction was that people started asking what German public opinion had to say? They have found out to their immense surprise that about 80 per cent. of the German people do not want to give up the deutschmark, and some of those will insist that their currency is not surrendered to the ecu and the EC.

I do not know whether France was contemplating a referendum, but it is interesting that, as soon as the Danish result was announced, Mr. Mitterrand decided that France had to have a referendum too. Although on current indications it appears that the French would say yes to the present treaty, there is a long time to go and Mr. Mitterrand, with all respect to him, is a somewhat diminishing asset in French politics.

In Britain, the Danish referendum has produced an extremely interesting result. In both our major parties—I am not sure about the Front-Bench spokesmen—there has been a major reconsideration of the wisdom of the positions that have been taken up. There has been an open debate. At last people are turning their minds to what is involved and whether it is harmful or beneficial to the British people. In the Conservative party, as we well know, only 22 Members voted against the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on Second Reading, but if that Second Reading had come after the Danish referendum, nearer 80 or 90 would have voted against it.

That changing opinion is going on dynamically within the two major political parties and in the country as a whole. The country is beginning to wake up. One of the great things about the Danes is that they made the treaty available to their people. It went to every household. They could read it and see what it was about, and that produced the resistance. They did not receive any encouragement from their press, television or radio, but they saw what the treaty implied for them and they were not going to have it. I have a strong feeling that, if we were to give our own people a fair summary of what is involved in the treaty, British opinion would be equally strongly opposed and a referendum would result in a no vote for the United Kingdom.

It is in the face of that change of opinion in Britain that the Government are seeking to persuade people on both sides of the House and everywhere else that the treaty does not do what it does but something very different; that it is a treaty not about further centralisation but about decentralisation—stopping, reversing, the very process of which the country is afraid. I find that astonishing.

It is no use people saying, "If only you could leave out of consideration economic and monetary union, it is possible that there could be a trade-off between some functions reverting to nation states and others passing to the Community," because EMU is at the heart of the treaty. I refer to the transfer from the nation states of Europe of their decisive remaining powers over the conduct of their own economies to a European central bank, and the use of a single European currency.

All the powers that we used to exercise and exercise now to control our own exchange rate and interest rates, and even the basic Budget judgments of successive Chancellors as to the balance between expenditure, revenue, and public sector borrowing will go. In terms of centralised decision-making, it will be the greatest step forward since the Rome treaty was signed in 1957. It is the biggest change ever—and I understate the situation rather than overstate it.

The Government are in some ways in a better position than my right hon. and hon. Friends. The Government can say, "We have not yet signed up to economic and monetary union. We have our opt-out clause." What worries me is that I do not think that they will operate it. My right hon. and hon. Friends are willing to see the transfer of crucial economic powers to a European central bank without exercising any political control, and the introduction of a single currency—and so deny themselves the remaining powers that might influence the level of unemployment in this country and many other things as well. They are prepared to give that up. I find that amazing.

I hope that that feeling will grow steadily on these Benches and that, when the time comes, we shall make known our feelings about the whole treaty. If the Bill ever reaches Third Reading, I have no doubt that, in all conscience, the Labour party must vote against it.

When one examines the concept of subsidiarity, many people can mount a considerable exegesis against it. I will

*[Mr. Shore]*

draw attention to some aspects that I find very odd, but, before I do so, I will quote one or two people whose opinions on article 3b should be taken seriously.

I read recently a publication published by the Society of Conservative Lawyers, "Europe and the Constitution after Maastricht". On subsidiarity, it concluded:

"The doctrine of subsidiarity is, without profound institutional reform or changes of attitude or both, virtually worthless as a protection against further unwanted expansion of the European laws and institutions into further aspects of our national life."

That is not an isolated opinion. I am sure that other right hon. and hon. Members read the comment by Lord Mackenzie-Stuart, recently president of the European Court of Justice, that the treaty definition is

"a rich and prime example of gobbledegook embracing simultaneously two opposed concepts of subsidiarity. To regard the chosen formula as a constitutional safeguard shows great optimism."

That opinion must be taken seriously.

I quote also from today's edition of the *Financial Times*, which is usually fairly friendly to the Government—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It has much higher intellectual standards than are usually applied by newspapers loyal to the Government. That newspaper described article 3b as "an intellectual jellyfish". I would adopt much more moderate language. The definition is a constitutional placebo. It is meant to give people the illusion that they are being treated for a serious condition when all that they are getting is some pink medicine in a bottle. It will not achieve its aim of quelling the anxieties of the Danish people or those in Britain who oppose European centralism.

Article 3b states that, in areas outside its exclusive competence,

"the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiary, only if and insofar as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of proposed action, be better achieved by the Community."

Sufficiently achieved or better achieved—it is pretty open. It is all a question of judgment, as it must be.

When I read those words, I wondered about defence procurement. Can the European fighter aircraft be sufficiently achieved by the member states, or could it be better achieved by the Community? If the latter, should we transfer defence procurement to Community level? What about defence generally? Is defence better achieved by a collective effort rather than by individual efforts being brought together?

**Mr. Hurd:** The right hon. Gentleman shows that he does not understand the point. Defence is not within the competence of the Community, and therefore the treaty's articles do not apply. That is made perfectly clear. The danger that the right hon. Gentleman suggests cannot arise.

**Mr. Shore:** I ask the right hon. Gentleman to think a little more carefully. I was speaking about defence procurement.

**Mr. Hurd:** And then about defence.

**Mr. Shore:** I went on in that way. I understand the right hon. Gentleman's pillars, and so on; I am well instructed in these matters. I gave an illustration in terms of defence procurement, which I ask the right hon. Gentleman seriously to consider.

The crucial question about subsidiarity is who decides. Will it be the nation states or the union? We know that it will in the end be the European Court that decides—and it is part of the union's supranational machinery, I have little doubt which way its judgments will incline.

I would like the right to decide what is appropriate for my region and local area. Such matters are not for the Community but for the House to decide—freely, in debate. Implicit in the doctrine of subsidiarity is the higher tier of Euroepean government to which things will be transferred that are appropriate to that level—such as the single currency, a central bank, and so on.

The attempt to define subsidiarity will be abortive. It will be difficult to define that slippery word in any meaningful way. It would be better if the Government put more firmly and in a more central place on their agenda items with which they could conceivably make progress. I wholeheartedly welcome the successful completion of the Uruguay round, although we know perfectly well that one of the principal obstacles is to be found within the Community itself. It will take enormous effort to persuade certain nations to reach a reasonable compromise with other GATT members.

My right hon. Friends the shadow Chancellor and the Leader of the Opposition suggested, when responding to a recent statement by the Prime Minister, that we ought to pay more attention during our presidency of the Community to its main economic, social, and political problem. I refer to the mass unemployment that afflicts not only this country but virtually every member state except Germany. Let no one have any illusions about unemployment levels and the length of time that they have endured in France and Italy—which have benefited enormously from being ERM members for 10 years. Those countries have suffered. Germany is the country that has gained most.

What can we do? I am pretty certain that two factors are helping to make deflation worse. One is the fixed parities that we have under the ERM. It seems to me that there is no doubt that many countries in western Europe —I exclude Germany—would benefit enormously if they could lower their interest rates and provide their entrepreneurs with some prospect of success. But we cannot lower our interest rates because of the effect that that would have on our exchange rate parity. The Government know that, as all Opposition Members know it, or should know it. As we are members of the ERM and have a fixed parity, we cannot lower our interest rates. That is a major deflationary factor operating now, without any further progress into economic and monetary union.

That brings me to the second factor. We are in the first stage in economic and monetary union. Indeed, the second stage will begin on 1 January 1994. The objective throughout Europe is to achieve a degree of convergence, above all in interest rates and exchange rates, and steadfastness in the control of borrowing and the avoidance of an excessive deficit. That pressure is on now. Over the next few years, all of Europe, including Britain, will have cuts in public expenditure designed to bring us within the parameters of convergence set in the treaty. These are major problems. We face them now, and, in my

view, we must think very seriously about what we are entering into—quite apart from that to which we have already committed ourselves in the ERM.

Surely there is a solution. Surely we ought to be helping to promote a currency realignment within the ERM. That would be of great benefit to Britain and to all the other countries in Europe, apart from Germany, which are suffering from deflation and high unemployment at present.

Those are the things which I urge upon the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whom I am glad to see on the Government Front Bench, and which I urge equally strongly upon Opposition Front-Bench Members, who, I know, want to do the best for the people of this country but, so far, have been sadly misled by the claims made on behalf of the authors of the Maastricht treaty.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Before calling the next hon. Member, may I remind the House that the 10-minute rule is now operating? As very many hon. Members wish to speak, it would be even more helpful if speeches were to take less than 10 minutes.

7.2 pm

**Sir Peter Hordern** (Horsham): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has made many speeches on this subject, and on this occasion hon. Members listened to him with their usual attentiveness. His criticisms of the Maastricht treaty might well have been made in respect of every single process, and in every period, of the European Community. I have heard before from him many of his remarks. I heard what he said when the Single European Act came into force and what he said at the time of the referendum.

But recently, because of the Maastricht treaty, there has been a change in the course of the debate. There is now concentration on subsidiarity—a question with which the right hon. Gentleman dealt at some length. My right hon. and hon. Friends will know that some months ago we were told that the course of the European Community could be likened to that of a train. We were told that we should be careful not to be left off it. I maintain that the progress is now more akin to that of a car. A number of people are warning us that a motor car is a very dangerous thing. They are right to warn us, but they should not do so by walking in front of the car and waving a red flag, or by wearing sandwich boards telling us that we should all repent while we can.

It is very important to be able to drive a motor car. We have been in the European Community for a very long time, and there are considerable benefits to be derived from membership. I believe that the argument should not be based entirely on constitutional matters. In this connection, it appears that the lawyers cannot agree with each other—but that is nothing new. We ought to accept that the Danes have done us a service. Of course, it is true that the Maastricht treaty itself has not changed, and that at the Second Reading stage the majority in favour of the treaty was very substantial. But there is no reason for not looking very carefully at the consequences of the treaty if and when it comes back for its Committee stage.

During our presidency we shall have an opportunity to define very carefully the areas of subsidiarity. That would do more than anything else to settle the doubts and difficulties of many people. If Ministries, not only in this country but all over Europe, were instructed to find practical examples of the areas in which they believe national Governments would operate best, leaving other areas—probably relatively few—in respect of which the Commission could operate that would be an advantage.

Moreover, it is not right to talk just about new forms of legislation. Existing European legislation too should be looked at with a view to seeing what could be done by national Governments rather than by the European Commission.

**Mr. Cash:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Sir Peter Hordern:** I know that my hon. Friend is anxious to interrupt, but I hope that he will forgive me if I do not give way. I want to make my speech as quickly as possible. This is one of the difficulties about the 10-minute rule. I will give way to my hon. Friend, but not just at the moment.

My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Government have a real opportunity, during the next few months, to spell out very carefully the points arising from subsidiarity. The views of the Society of Conservative Lawyers and of Mr. Martin Howe on the matter of subsidiarity have been mentioned. Having read what was said by Mr. Howe, I can say that his particular objection to a European central bank and a single currency is that they would represent a significant loss of sovereignty. I realise that this is a matter of deep concern to many hon. Members.

Somehow the impression has been given that a single currency and what is seen as a loss of sovereignty are entirely new. Let me remind the House that ever since the days of Robert Peel—for 150 years, since we first went on the gold standard—Parliament has willingly abandoned the sovereignty attached to our own money and co-ordinated it precisely with the value of gold. In effect, we were saying that the value of our currency was dictated by Californian, Australian and South African gold miners. And that was during the heyday of the Victorian empire. Nobody then criticised us for losing national sovereignty.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney will know very well that, after the war, we were subscribers to the Bretton Woods agreement. The pound was indissolubly linked to the American dollar. That continued for very many years—indeed, until Harold Wilson's Government withdrew, and there was difficulty about devaluation. But that is a matter that I will not go into now. The point is that, during the period to which I referred, the pound was linked indissolubly to the United States dollar, and the value of the dollar was set by the Federal Reserve Board of the United States, which is entirely independent of the United States Government.

**Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith** (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great lessons to have been learnt from that system is that the collapse of the United States dollar's value gave rise to great strains, problems and tensions, not only for the United States but for the economies of all the other countries? We learned that a floating currency was essential.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** For a long time I would have agreed with my hon. Friend, but I regret to say that that is not the case now. Perhaps we chose to link ourselves with the wrong standard, although it worked very well for many years. Let me remind the House of what the conditions were during most of the post-war years. At that time inflation averaged about 3 per cent., and long-term interest

*[Sir Peter Hordern]*

rates were 5 per cent. As recently as 1963 a 20-year bond was yielding 5 per cent. That was the level at which people and Governments could safely borrow.

Of course there are disadvantages in being linked to a firm currency, and I do not deny that the German mark has a good deal more to say for itself than the American dollar. All I can say to those who talk of a loss of sovereignty, however, is that we have been at it for a long time in the past, and have done very well out of it. There is a great deal to be said for being able to engage in long-term borrowing at low interest rates. I consider the link with the European exchange rate mechanism very valuable, for reasons that have nothing to do with European-ness but everything to do with controlling inflation.

It is, of course, difficult to see how some of the criteria mentioned in the protocol for arriving at a single currency can be followed. There is, for instance, the idea that the financial deficit must not be more than 3 per cent. of gross domestic product: the Italian deficit is 11 or 12 per cent. and climbing, and for most of the time Italy has no Government. There is the idea of establishing a wider Community by including first the EFTA countries and then Hungary and Czechoslovakia, with their enormous deficits. It is hard to see how the timetable set out so clearly in the protocol can possibly be achieved.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said, "Ah, but it is in the treaty." I believe that that is the way in which constitutional lawyers think: they think that because a certain figure—3 per cent., for instance—is mentioned in the treaty, it must come about.

**Mr. Cash:** My hon. Friend has talked of sovereignty, but he has skated over the fact that, during the time to which he referred, we had a political system—which we want to retain—in which the ultimate decisions were made in the House, on behalf of the people of this country.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** I fear that my hon. Friend was not listening; I suggest that he read *Hansard*. My point was that, when we were tied to the Federal Reserve Board of the United States, no one accused us of losing sovereignty. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but we cannot have an undercurrent of conversation while an hon. Member is addressing the House.

**Sir Peter Hordern:** I understand the concern that is felt about economic and social cohesion. I consider it much better to deal with such matters by means of investment than by means of transfers of taxpayers' money, and I note that the far east seems to have more cohesion at present than any other part of the world. The Japanese would never dream of handing over taxpayers' money to foreign countries throughout the far east, which is growing more rapidly than any other area. Instead, it invests massively in countries such as Thailand——

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, but the 10-minute rule must operate firmly.

7.12 pm

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): I want to address two issues that were raised by the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman). The first is the situation in what was formerly Yugoslavia, and the approach of the EC and Britain to intervention there; the second is the question of ratification of the Maastrich treaty following the Danish referendum.

It was inevitable that the break-up of the Communist regimes in Yugoslavia and eastern Europe would lead to conflict. Too many people were going to find themselves inside borders that they rejected. The process of unravelling the problems of Communism may well take many decades; in the meantime, we shall undoubtedly witness much human suffering until the various communities have sorted out a relationship and borders within which they can live. It is right for the Government to be reluctant to intervene militarily in that process.

In the United States, the influential senator Richard Lugar, minority chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has called for force to be used in Bosnia. I understand that he discussed the matter with the Prime Minister recently and that the Prime Minister urged caution. The right hon. Gentleman was right to do so. Too often in the past, the Americans have sought to go in and impose a solution, and in Yugoslavia such action could be disastrous. Nevertheless, it is possible to foresee circumstances in which the level of killing will reach such a scale, and the abuse of human rights will become so awful, that some kind of intervention would be required.

I hope that—unlike his predecessor, who is now in another place—the Prime Minister will not feel obliged just to follow the United States. It must be clear to people in this country that, if we come under pressure in the next few months, we should not be involved in any intervention except under United Nations auspices—not the auspices of the Western European Union or the EC. Intervention must be for humanitarian and not political purposes; it must be restricted to the protection of life, rather than the imposing or deposing of any regime; any military intervention must be at the minimum level necessary to secure a limited humanitarian objective; and intervention should take place only after the failure of all other diplomatic methods.

Like many other British people, I know Yugoslavia only from visits to it—holidays, for instance. It is not "a small country, far away, of which we know little". Many British people will feel genuine concern for the suffering of people in towns such as Mostar, Sarajevo and Dubrovnik, and will know those places from personal experience. The United Nations may well need to take action at some stage. At that stage Britain should be supportive, but such action should be taken cautiously and with reluctance.

At a time when all eastern Europe is in flux, it is even more important for the countries of the European Community to provide a bulwark of stability and reassurance for those beyond their borders. That brings me to the second issue raised by the British presidency. Is the Maastricht treaty to be ratified before the end of the year, following the outcome of the Danish referendum?

The British presidency is in an embarrassing position: it will not be able to carry all members of the Government's party with it on ratification. That difficulty, however, is entirely of the Prime Minister's own making.

Opposition Members take a certain pleasure in observing the withdrawal of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, and then seeing the Prime Minister threaten his own side with resignation if the Back Benches do not support him later in the year. It is significant that, when offered an opportunity in the House recently to say that that was not his position, the right hon. Gentleman did not take it.

Maastricht is such an important issue that it is incumbent on a national leader to prevent himself from getting into such a situation by ensuring that there is a broad national consensus in favour of his approach to such a crucial matter. There was potential for a statesman to see a broad consensus across party lines; after all, did not Labour fight the April election on a manifesto that was more pro-European than the Tory manifesto? We wanted Maastricht plus the social chapter. Instead of creating a consensus, however, the Prime Minister took a narrow view, which he outlined in the House on 20 May. He declared then that his Bill was based on Conservative principles.

That failure to reach out beyond the needs of the business community is the central failure of the Government's position. The Maastricht Bill had to be withdrawn because it went no further than the boundaries of the Conservative view of Europe, and the Government could not rely on securing the votes to ensure its passage. That is why Opposition Members who accept that the Maastricht treaty—as signed by the majority of European states—is worth while are unable to support the Bill that the Prime Minister seeks to take through Parliament. That Bill leaves British workers with fewer rights than European workers. Perhaps inward investment will come to the United Kingdom because of a freer market, but the worst business men always create sweatshops and like less regulation. The best business men ensure that they provide good conditions on which to give workers a real investment in the future. Labour has decided not to vote for a sweatshop Britain. The social chapter opt-out means that that is what Britain could become. In our view, Europe must be more than a Europe of bankers and business men. It must be a Europe for working people, too.

At the centre of the European ideal must be the desire to reach out to everyone, to ordinary people, and to say to them, "You are part of this, too. The opportunities are yours and the benefits can be yours." It must not be a Europe for the few, in which the many benefit only from a trickle-down theory of economic prosperity. If we are serious about Europe, we must show that it reaches out, touches and benefits everyone directly by improving standards in the workplace.

The Prime Minister's Maastricht is therefore a polo mint treaty: the middle has been knocked out of it. The centre is missing. The social chapter was a way of making that agreement beneficial, in real terms, to everyone. That is why, as the Prime Minister struggles during the presidency to find a way out of the Maastricht dilemma, he should seek no succour from this side. The Prime Minister's view of Maastricht is too narrow and too mean for us to give him succour.

If the Maastricht Bill is not approved by the House by the end of the year, it will be the Prime Minister's fault. There need be no rush by the Opposition to set out our view on all the issues, such as a referendum. Let us wait and debate the issue. Let us watch the Prime Minister's discomfort. But let us be clear: Labour should not vote against Maastricht if the Danish problem can be resolved. The temptation to do so for tactical gain must be resisted.

Labour Members of Parliament were elected on a pro-European manifesto. To abstain because the Government's Bill is a narrow, mean document is one thing. To vote against a treaty that Labour could have supported by opting into the social chapter would be wrong, in the light of our manifesto commitment. It would raise the whole question of Labour's sincerity on Europe. It would also mean voting against some of the benefits that Maastricht still brings, despite the Government: majority voting in the Council of Ministers on various issues that could benefit British workers; increased democratic accountability through the European Parliament by its scrutiny of the budget and its approval of the President and the Commission. Labour would also lose the option of, perhaps, one day ensuring that the social chapter becomes law. We should also be voting against the principle, which I believe is important, of subsidiarity.

On Monday the Prime Minister committed the British presidency to defining what he called in the House the general principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is now at the centre of what he will try to achieve during the next six months, but he should have found out what it means before he signed the treaty. His failure in negotiating the treaty was due to the fact that before he signed it he did not seem to know what subsidiarity meant, and now—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am afraid that the axe falls impartially on both sides of the House.

7.22 pm

**Mr. James Hill** (Southampton, Test): I heard with horror in this Chamber a few weeks ago that we are going to have Delors for another two years. Knowing the man as I do and the work that he has done in Europe and knowing also that each Head of State elects his Own Commissioners and that there are 17 Commissioners, I ask, "Is there no talent there? Is there no contest at all?" Will Mr. Delors want another two years at the end of the next two years? I was amazed when I heard that Mr. Delors was our choice. I do not blame the Treasury Bench. It was a fait accompli in Lisbon. There was no other candidate for one of the supreme jobs in Europe. My protest goes no further. I know now that there has to be a pulling together behind the Prime Minister while we have the presidency of the European Community. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. There is a hum of conversation again. Those who carry on conversations while they are seated may find that it is difficult to catch my eye at a later stage in the debate.

**Mr. Hill:** The rejection of the Maastricht treaty by the Danish people in their referendum—the shock waves went through Europe and, luckily, through Mr. Delors as well —has brought about what I believe to be an adequate breathing space. It gives us time to reflect on the nature of the Maastricht treaty. Since the treaty was put together by several committees, it must surely be possible to polish and enhance it between now and the end of the year. We must give the Danes room to manoeuvre and time to reconsider their rejection of the Maastricht treaty. If we do not do so, there will be disharmony in the Community.

The mood of most British people is that they do not want to be ruled by a higher, centralised authority. When

*[Mr. Hill]*

I was a Member of the European Parliament, we had the most terrible arguments in 1973 over a common driving licence for a Community of, as it was then, nine. There has always been disagreement. That is the crux of the problem. Euro-sceptics will, I believe, support me when I say that people want decisions at that level to be made by their own national Parliaments.

The Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary are going to have a very tough six months. The Edinburgh agenda will contain some very emotive issues. We are assured that Mr. Delors and this country are now on the same side. There is an amusing cartoon in the *Evening Standard* today. The Prime Minister and Mr. Delors are shown playing tennis on the same side of the net. That is impossible. There will be friction and increasing disagreement as Mr. Delors gets over the traumatic shock of the Danish referendum.

Urgent consideration must be given to five issues. First, there must be minimum interference by the Brussels Commission. Britain wants subsidiarity so that power can be retained by national Governments and not given to bureaucrats in Brussels. Secondly, we all want the single market to be completed. The Twelve are desperate to dismantle trade barriers by the end of the year. That is a worthwhile goal. Thirdly, there must be a refusal to sanction increased spending; agreement must be reached about funding and about providing aid for the poorer nations. Fourthly, we want the Community to be enlarged. Britain wants Sweden, Finland, Austria and Switzerland —all European Free Trade Association countries—to become members of the Community as soon as possible.

The Select Committee on the European Communities in the other place has published a report on enlargement of the Community. It refers to the fact that, of all the nations that have applied for membership of the Community, the first application was made by Turkey, with a population of nearly 57 million. The next is Austria, with almost 8 million people who want to join, and so it goes on. The difficulty is whether to have a Community full of wealthy nations or whether the wealthy nations should support the poorer nations. One must be explicit about that in enlarging the Community, because there are already problems.

There has already been a request from Portugal for a 30 per cent. increase in the budget. That has been pushed to one side for the moment, but it will always be there. As enlargement of the Community continues, more and more money will be needed to carry out what is necessary for regional planning and development, for the transport infrastructure, new ports and shipping. That must come if one brings in the smaller nations. The difficulty is that there are two or perhaps three nations which are in a position to pay more than their percentage. The ambition to enlarge has been a problem for many years. The ambition to enlarge the Community from nine to 12 was bad enough—it was enlarged from six to nine—and at least seven other countries now wish to join.

I am definitely opposed to a referendum. We are sent to the House to make decisions. It is terribly easy to get out of making decisions by calling for a referendum, but that is not the House's way. The difficulty facing my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary is that the Maastricht treaty must survive in a way that allows the Danes to vote on a new treaty. The newspapers are querying whether the Danes, under their constitution, can go back on their decision, but I am sure that they will be able to do so if they are offered a new, polished treaty.

Another problem is that we are to have a single market at the end of the year. The other day I said that the Institute of Freight Forwarders would certainly need some assistance in the single market. Many other categories will need similar assistance. We do not live in a world which ignores its minorities, so I plead for that assistance.

7.31 pm

**Mr. Denzil Davies** (Llanelli): The Prime Minister was recently reported as describing the European Commission —no doubt in a moment of frustration—as a "voracious super-state monster". It is not only the Commission but the very notion and institution of the union which makes it a voracious super-state monster. As the United Kingdom embarks on its rather brief presidency, with its round of dinners, cocktail parties, special neckties which, we read, are being distributed by the Foreign Office for participants and, no doubt, trips to Kew Gardens for the women, the monster devours on. At Maastricht it ate practically the whole of monetary policy and gobbled up fiscal policy and, indeed, most what is left of economic policy.

While the Prime Minister was swooning—and he is still swooning—over subsidiarity and while the Foreign Secretary assured European women that he, the Foreign Secretary, was no spiv—I must say the use of that word dates him—the poor Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has never shown great enthusiasm for the monster, had an arm chewed off—or, if it was not chewed off last week, certainly it will be next week when he agrees on behalf of the Government never again to reduce value added tax below 15 per cent.

For the past 20 years I have sat here and watched three Conservative Governments, led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the Baroness and the present Prime Minister respectively, sign three treaties which have all nurtured and emboldened the monster of union. I suppose one could call the 1972 treaty of Rome "Jaws 1". The oddly named Single European Act 1986, which is a treaty not an Act, was "Jaws 2". We now have "Jaws 3"—the treaty of Maastricht. The job is almost finished. "Jaws 4" will not be long—in 1998 or 1999 we shall no doubt have the final European Act, and then we can all go home.

The characteristic of the Conservative party in relation to the three acts of union has been that of self-delusion, whether contrived, artificial or real. The treaty of Rome was marketed to the Conservative party as a measure which would rejuvenate the British economy, dish the socialists and the unions and put Britain at the head of Europe. The Baroness deluded herself that the Single European Act would unleash an army of entrepreneurs into the heart of a dirigiste continent, preaching and baptising as it went. Qualified majority voting was conveniently forgotten, ignored or not noticed.

As we have heard today, the present Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—since the Danish referendum the poor Foreign Secretary looks as if he is suffering from what I understand is now described as post-traumatic stress syndrome—are now deluding themselves that

subsidiarity will be the great vehicle for stopping the monster gobbling more and more, despite the massive centralisation involved in economic and monetary union.

The Tory party's history has been one of self-delusion all along. As for my party, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends become zealots when faced with the monster. There are still some here—perhaps two or three—who were with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup when he started the long march towards European union in 1972. Indeed, I believe that two or three helped to hold up the standards of legions when it seemed that the official standard bearers found it rather diffficult. Some other hon. Friends joined a bit later but now they are lustily marching with the legions, singing the old campaign songs as they go to the ultimate triumph at Brussels.

To assist the Prime Minister—I hope that it will not happen—and to help the standards of Maastricht would be a mistake for the Labour party. In my humble opinion —I say this with no malice or disrespect—to do so would mean the permanent abandoning of some of the fundamental beliefs and principles which have been the cornerstones of the Labour party's political philosophy.

The demands of Maastricht are very severe. Maastricht demands a central bank as the sole controller and arbiter of monetary policy. That has never been the Labour party's policy. Maastricht demands the pursuit of price stability which in the end can only mean nil inflation, at the expense of all other economic goals, including a reduction in unemployment. Again, I submit that that has never been my party's policy.

Maastricht demands restrictions on public expenditure way beyond the restrictions of good sense and good judgement because such restrictions are to be written into the rule of law and into a treaty. Again, that has never been the policy of the Labour party.

Finally, there are the regions. We Labour Members of Parliament mostly represent the old industrial areas of Britain—Wales, the North of England and Scotland.

**Mr. Enright:** And Yorkshire.

**Mr. Davies:** I include Yorkshire in the north of England, although if my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) wishes me to do so I shall mention Yorkshire separately.

The old industrial areas of Britain are declining. To alleviate and ameliorate economic and monetary union those areas would need a massive transfer of funds from the centre, such as could be accommodated only by a European income tax and a European value added tax. That will not happen.

Under the Maastricht treaty the older industrial areas of Britain get nothing, not even from the social cohesion fund. There is a fund, but it is for the poorer areas of the Community such as Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece. There is nothing for areas of the Community such as Wales, Scotland, the north of England—and Yorkshire —which will suffer grievously from the concentration and centralisation of currency and of power over money. We get nothing, so even on the ground of regional policy I see no case for the Labour party to support the treaty.

To add insult to injury, we shall have to pay into the new social cohesion fund to assist Ireland and Spain. The people of the declining valleys of south Wales are generous, but they will be asked to contribute to a social fund for Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland. If our people are to be asked to contribute to alleviate poverty I would rather we helped to alleviate the real poverty in the world—in Ethiopia, for instance, and in Mozambique, Sudan and the other countries which are really suffering.

There is nothing in the Maastricht treaty that requires the Labour party to throw overboard the fundamental principles on which it is based. Maastricht is not worth it. Let us not help the Prime Minister to carry it through.

7.41 pm

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): Despite the fact that I have only 10 minutes to speak, it would be wrong not to pay tribute to the superb maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant). Those of us who heard him know that he spoke not only with great sincerity but with great clarity. He did not use a note, and obviously felt things deeply. If I had to criticise that new hon. Member, it would be because he sought assurances.

The problem in all our European debates and discussions of the legislation has been that hon. Members have sought assurances and have been given them, the legislation has been passed, and then we have found to our horror that things are not exactly that they appeared to be.

The Single European Act provides many examples. People were told that there was not much in that measure; it was simply a move towards free trade. Yet now we find that there is a power to legislate by majority vote on a whole range of human activities. Time and again assurances have been given—on VAT, for example. I was astonished to hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer say earlier in the debate:

"we are committed to the harmonisation of indirect taxes in as far as that is necessary for the internal market. That is something to which he and I"—

my right hon. Friend was talking to a Labour Member— "his party and mine, are committed".

Let us look back at what was said at the time. We were told, "Don't worry about it. We have a veto. We can stop anything that we want to stop. And we do not need to harmonise taxes to achieve the internal market." If anyone doubts that, he must look back and read what was said. Sadly, we are constantly being consoled with assurances and with little words. Remember all those words about fighting a federal Europe. Goodness knows what those words meant—a federal Europe would be far better than what we have now. Then there was all that nonesense about subsidiarity. We all know in our hearts that there is nothing in the legislation to achieve that. Subsidiarity is a form of words which every lawyer to whom I have spoken says means very little.

It is very important that over the next six months the Government have a duty to inform people, to tell them what the score is. The first thing to tell people is that Maastricht is not small stuff. The Bill is not a small Bill which will not affect people, and subsidiarity will not sort it all out. Maastricht is huge stuff. It is a huge surrender of sovereignty. I was amazed to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) say that the single currency was not bad because we used to have the gold standard, and was that not a good idea because it kept inflation down? Of course it did. We used to have Bretton Woods, so inflation was kept down.

I remind anyone who agrees with my hon. Friend that the gold standard brought certain problems of which we are aware, and I advise them to read the treaty. If people

*[Sir Teddy Taylor]*

read it, they will realise that this will not be simply a question of a gold standard, to which we, as a democratic Government, try to adhere. The proposition is that a central bank will be appointed for eight years, and will not be subject to control by anybody. The Government are not even allowed to make representations to the central bank; nor are the trade unions or local authorities. The bank will run the show, and it will tell my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham and all our colleagues in government to stick to a particular borrowing requirement or a particular industry. If we do not do as we are told, we shall be fined as a nation—we shall be in a position more pathetic than that of the smallest rate-capped council.

I ask all hon. Members not to give the impression that Maastricht is small business. It is huge business. It means that our Treasury ceases to be effective. Effectively, all decisions on economic affairs will be transferred to the central bank.

Again, we have been given assurances, such as, "Isn't it great—Britain has not committed itself to a central currency?" We are supposed to rise up and cheer, to say, "Hooray! Isn't that great!" If we are tied to a single European currency by the narrow band of the exchange rate mechanism, what freedom shall we have? It will be the same silly freedom as was provided by the Scottish pound note. Where is the freedom of the Scottish Treasury? There is none. The idea is a load of rubbish. *[Interruption.]* Of course, it is lovely to have a Scottish pound note, and it is lovely to have lovely ladies from the Scottish National party here, such as the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), but the fact that Scotland has its own pound not does not mean that it runs its economy. I ask the Government to get the facts across to people, and to stop hiding them.

I do not say that in a narrow way. Let us consider the European legislation. It all pours through the House, and we cannot do anything about it. It used to be debated on the Floor of the House after 10 pm, and some Members used to talk about it and complain. That had to stop. European legislation was shoved down to the Standing Committees. We were told, "Don't worry. They will be broadly based Committees, and all strands of opinion will be represented. It will be lovely." In fact, Standing Committee A lasted for one year—and now look what has happened to it. All the Euro-sceptics are out. They have all been kicked out of the door—I am one of them. The Committee now consists of people who are basically of one point of view. I am sure that they are nice, genuine people who are kind to children and dogs—but that is not democracy. It is totally wrong.

The same applies to parliamentary questions—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) may consider this funny. If he does, I suggest that he goes to the Table Office tomorrow and asks what is the size of the current mountain of butter and beef. He will be told, "I am terribly sorry; you cannot ask that now." Let my hon. Friend ask what the deficit in trade with Europe is. He will be told, "I am terribly sorry; you cannot ask that now. You will find that in computers now." That is wrong, and contrary to every principle of democracy. Questions cannot be asked and laws cannot even be revealed. *The Guardian* reveals this morning that a massive important new step in immigration is being taken, but we shall not hear about it.

If we accept that Maastricht is a big thing, why cannot we ask the people of Britain? It is wrong that they are not being told. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire asked the Government for an assurance that we were not moving into a single centralised Europe. I am sure that the Government will tell him, "Don't worry. We shall not move into a centralised European state." But under Maastricht there is to be a common European citizen. Every one of us and all our friends and neighbours will be citizens of a European union. All economic policy will come out of a central bank which nobody controls. There will be a massive transfer of extra powers to the European Community. If all that is to happen, we shall already have a centralised European state. People in Britain might want that, and if they want to vote yes that is fine. But if we force people into that state without consulting them and telling them all the implications, they will wake up at some stage and will be very angry.

I have listened to all the stuff about Yugoslavia and about how the EEC will make a positive contribution. I plead with people to consider Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and other places where people have been forced together without being consulted, against their wishes. At some stage they get extremely angry.

I hope that, in the future, the Government will not be the mugs of Europe. Because we tend to be nice people, because we are mainly Conservatives, we tend to try to keep to the rules. I urge people to consider what has happened with the European fighter aircraft. In fairness to the EEC, that grand project was a matter between certain European states. It is a shame that the EFA was not an EEC project, because we could have kept on building those aircraft and shoved them into a food mountain under the common agricultural policy. Germany came to an agreement with us, but then pulled out because that was in the interests of Germany. Sadly, we sometimes forget that within the great EEC there is a need to look after ourselves.

I appeal to the Government and to the Chancellor, who I accept as one of the most decent chaps that I have ever met in politics. I am not saying that in a silly way; I believe it. Will the people of common sense in the Government please, please wake up while we still have the opportunity to do something about the economy? Our economy is bleeding to death. We have a massive public sector borrowing requirement—the biggest rate of borrowing that one could ever dream of. I am sorry that the Chancellor has to go to the market to borrow all that money. Our balance of payments is at a disastrous level and the level of unemployment is appalling.

I recognise those problems, all hon. Members do, but we do not want to talk about them because there is nothing we can do. We cannot reduce interest rates because of the wretched exchange rate mechanism. How is it logical for anyone to pretend that the currency is worth something which it is not worth? How can we then deprive ourselves of the opportunity to do anything about that? I accept that we should have a feeling of charity towards others, but such thinking is against common sense. It is against everything that the Conservative party stands for. It is also against everything that Labour stands for. I believe that all the parties should wake up.

7.51 pm

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): I have listened with some interest to this debate, which is like so many that we have had on this issue. We must remember that there is a real world outside the House. It is a real world where the German economy is the dominant economy of Europe. We must recognise that international trade patterns are dominated by the development of large companies that move resources around the continent and the world.

From listening to some of today's speeches one might be tempted to think either that the EC does not exist or that it is about to be set up. One could be forgiven for thinking that this debate centres on whether Britain should be a member of the Community. I say that as someone who campaigned for the no vote in 1975. But we must recognise that the world has changed, that the Community consists of 12 countries, that it is a magnet to other countries in the east and that, potentially, it could consist of up to 25 countries. We must decide what is in Britain's best interest. Surely it is not in Britain's interest to pretend that we can opt out of international processes without damaging consequences for our economy.

I am critical of many aspects of the Maastricht treaty. If it had been negotiated by a Labour Government, it would have been far better. The Labour party would not have put before the House the Bill that has subsequently been withdrawn because the Maastricht treaty would have been better in the first place. My party would have presented not a Maastricht-minus Bill, but the full Maastricht Bill.

Many of my hon. Friends and I face a dilemma and I suspect that our voices are not as loud in the Chamber today as they are within our party. We do not want progress towards a social Europe, which would act as a counterbalance to the free market of the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act, to be stopped in its tracks. We want to continue that process to achieve a balance to counter the free market ideological approach that some Conservatives favour. That is why they favour the opt-out.

As the European Trade Union Confederation said in its statement after the Danish referendum, it is crucial that we do not stop the progress towards a social Europe. We must try to accelerate that process and strengthen the social and democratic aspects of the Community as a means of counterbalancing the free market process.

I do not agree very often with the *Evening Standard*, but today it called for the European Parliament to be given the right to initiate legislation to counterbalance the power of the Commission. We should consider such a proposal, because it is clear that we will be unable to have a truly democratic community if we simply leave decisions to the Commission and the Council of Ministers. It is clear from its new immigration proposals that that Council is quite happy to do things in secret.

We must use the democratic institutions of the Community. Our Parliament, the Parliaments of other member states and the European Parliament must work together to return power to the people. Our country has no written constitution, and it has no rules about spending and advertising on various campaigns. The real exponents of democracy are not those who call for a referendum, but those who believe in parliamentary control at appropriate levels. That means giving more powers to national Parliaments and the European Parliament so that the institutions of the Community and the Council of Ministers are subject to control.

It would be a terrible mistake if the Labour party supported a call for a referendum. My opposition to referendums rests on the view put forward by the best Prime Minister that we ever had this century. On 24 May 1945, when deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee wrote to Winston Churchill:

> "I could not consent to the introduction into our national life of a device so alien to all our traditions as the referendum, which has only too often been the instrument of Nazism and Fascism".

If one gives a Government the power to write the questions and set the rules, one knows what the answer will be. There might be a different outcome in countries such as Italy where citizens have initiative referendums, but that possibility is not open to us.

I suspect that the Conservatives will come up with the idea of a referendum to get out of their problems, because they know that they will be able to get the result that they want. Nevertheless, I do not think that anyone in the Opposition or anyone who believes in democracy should support such a device.

The way in which we, the Opposition, resolve our dilemma depends on the Bill that the Government produce. If they produce a Bill that is the full Maastricht treaty, I am sure that there will be a strong feeling of support for it among my hon. Friends, although, of course, we have some criticisms of it. If they produce another Maastricht-minus Bill, that could cause more difficulties for me and my hon. Friends. The Government must decide on the type of Bill that they want to introduce, but I do not believe that anyone should expect the Labour party to solve the Conservative party's internal problems. I, for one, will not go into the same Lobby as the racists and xenophobes of the Tory right wing, and nor will many of my hon. Friends.

We are presented with a great opportunity. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has written a perceptive book about the failure for many years of British politicians of all parties to seize the opportunities presented in Europe. If we take the wrong decisions during the six months of the British presidency and if we drag our feet and try to undermine the processes going on in Europe, we will be left behind once more. I have no doubt that the Franco-German economic and political co-operation linked to the Benelux countries and the countries of central and eastern Europe will continue. That process is inevitable. We have a choice: to be part of an alliance with the French, Italians and others to try to influence the current processes, or to become simply part of the deutschmark zone by default. That is our dilemma and our choice. I hope that we take the right decision.

7.59 pm

**Mr. Bowen Wells** (Hertford and Stortford): As this is the first time that I have spoken in this Parliament and under your chairmanship, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I congratulate you on your assumption to office? If you continue to chair our proceedings through the dinner hour and late at night, I fear that you will have to hear from me more often than you might choose.

I want to begin by referring to one or two points that have been made in the debate because they are points that I would otherwise have made in my speech. I agreed with

*[Mr. Bowen Wells]*

the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) when he said that the European Community made a serious mistake when it permitted the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia prior to their negotiating their way out of the state of Yugoslavia in a peaceful, sensible and orderly manner.

That card was given away by the Community's intergovernmental pillar on foreign affairs that is contained in the Maastricht treaty. When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary appeared before the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, he said that he had not wanted to break the unity of the European Community, even though he had given evidence earlier that he was not in favour of the recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, those two small, unviable and uneconomic republics. However, I severely disagreed with the rest of the speech by the right hon. Member for Gorton.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a rather optimistic speech. If I heard the right hon. Gentleman correctly, he seemed to believe that the Danish referendum had caused the juggernaut of Europe to stop. The Maastricht treaty was approved in the Folketing with 157 votes in favour and 22 against. In other words, the Parliament, the Government and the Social Democratic party in Denmark approved the treaty. However, the treaty was lost in the referendum when 50·7 per cent. said no and 49·3 per cent. said yes. I suggest to the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney that that is a very narrow buffer for the juggernaut.

During our presidency of the Community, I believe that my right hon. Friends will explain and reinforce the ideas behind the Maastricht treaty which are essentially a major departure from earlier treaties. The treaty of Rome and the Single European Act were both highly centralising. The Single European Act introduced majority voting on many of the issues on which right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House had natural objections because they rolled over opinion in this country. They have introduced harmonisation of a very offensive and unnecessary nature.

Britain stood outside those two treaties. We were not part of the initial negotiations on the treaty of Rome. The noble Baroness Thatcher, who has just taken her seat in the other place, was particularly concerned with getting our money back in respect of the European Single Act. She agreed to the centralising and introduction of majority voting as a compromise. She was not in the middle of the negotiating procedures. She was outside, shouting and demanding.

That was not the right way to take care of Britain's vital interests. In that way, Britain's vital interests were very often ignored. By contrast, my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), decided in the negotiations on the Maastricht treaty that Britain's interests and concerns would be central to their negotiating tactics and achievements.

In my view, and in the view of the House on three different occasions, and amid much acclamation, my right hon. Friends achieved substantially what they set out to do. I pay tribute to their negotiating skill. Let us consider their achievements. They achieved a definition of subsidiarity which, I accept, may be defective. However, no such concept is contained in the treaty of Rome or the European Single Act. No matter how legally defective that subsidiarity clause is, it demonstrates the ideas shared by my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East (Sir Teddy Taylor) and for Stafford (Mr. Cash). We do not want decisions to be taken in the centre of Europe unless they have to be for the benefit of the whole Community. We must build on that and we have an opportunity to do so. The Maastricht treaty contains provision for an intergovernmental conference on constitutional change in 1996.

We must build on the concepts of a more decentralised Europe and a Europe that takes account of subsidiarity. If that does not work, we must introduce more substantial definitions for what we mean. We should place institutional and constitutional blocks on the Community and particularly on the Commission to stop them acting when we do not want them to. There are obviously other opportunities.

However, if we reject the Maastricht treaty now, we will have to begin the negotiations all over again. We will undoubtedly face the serious federal instincts of many of our partners in Europe. Germany, France, Italy and Spain want a supranational Europe. They believe that the Maastricht treaty is a stepping stone to a federal Europe. If the intergovernmental pillars on defence, foreign and home affairs, which my right hon. Friends managed to have placed in the Maastricht treaty, work and are accountable and sensitive to the people and Parliaments of Europe, we can build on that experience and begin to decentralise even more. We will have shown a different way in Europe.

The countries of Europe are beginning to rethink the idea of a central Europe. They want a democratically-controlled Europe. They do not want a Europe which is a supranational state with no accountability, which is not enforced and which is not something with which people can identify. That is what my right hon. and hon. Friends have achieved in the negotiations. They have changed the climate of Europe in the treaty. It would be a major mistake if the Maastricht treaty were not ratified.

During the course of the six months of our presidency, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will persuade the Community to ratify the treaty by explaining what subsidiarity means and taking certain enforcement measures. I hope that they will make it clear that the audit functions of the European institutions will be developed along the lines of our Audit Commission which reports to Parliament. That is what the Audit Commission in the European Community should do. It is now a European institution which eventually will have teeth. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and I have spent many hours late at night in this place commenting upon the Audit Commission's reports, but nothing is done. That is the problem. If we develop the progress that has been made by my right hon. and hon. Friends, we will be able to build the kind of Europe in which we can live—a democratic, accountable Europe in which the rule of law is paramount.

8.9 pm

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): I wish to impress on the Government the need to act decisively and with courage to deal with the situation in South Africa. Before I develop my remarks, I advise those who heard me described this morning on BBC radio as the former chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement that I remain the chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and wish to do so until the job is done.

Everyone who has been concerned with South African affairs has experienced a gamut of emotions since February 1990. When Nelson Mandela was released there was amazing joy and exuberance, first because it was right that he should be released, but, secondly and more important, because we believed that it heralded a new era in South African politics and its history, and that we would get negotiations and a move towards a peaceful settlement. None of us was idealistic or naive enough to believe that the process would not be difficult. We expected frustration.

I recall an early meeting with Nelson Mandela soon after he was released. He said, "Don't imagine for one moment that the path of negotiations will be smooth and downhill all the way. There will be times when we will be going uphill, there will be twists and turns, and there will be times when the process of negotiation will stall, but we have to reach a successful conclusion." If we have felt frustrated about the length of time that has been taken in negotiations, we can imagine the frustration of the dispossessed and the poor of South Africa when so little is changing but taking such a long time.

Another emotion that we experienced was anger—bitter anger at the violence that has been perpetrated in South Africa. One cannot imagine what the savagery has been like. I have seen it in Ndaleni, Natal, and it is dreadful. Everyone knows and believes that the violence can be stopped if there is sufficient will.

I make a direct call to Chief Buthelezi—"Call off the dogs of war of Inkatha." I also call on President de Klerk —"Get control of the police and security forces, because ample evidence exists that, at least at the minimum, there is complicity by the police and security forces." I have spoken to white South African Members of Parliament who have given me first-hand evidence of the police and security forces disarming township dwellers and the people living in squatter camps and then, an hour or so later, Inkatha Impis perpetrate the butchery. It has to stop.

If 70, 700, never mind 7,000, whites instead of blacks had been killed, there would have been action. The Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary would have been offering troops to go and end the situation. There would have been outrage and clamour from the international community for it to be stopped. A black life is just as important as a white life. Unless we understand that and try to deal with it, the trust that is necessary for negotiations will not be forthcoming.

Some people have asked why the negotiations have been called off. The Foreign Secretary says that the differences are narrow but significant. They are narrow in mathematical terms. The African National Congress says that changing the constitution should be by a two thirds/one third majority. President de Klerk says that it should be a 75 per cent./25 per cent. majority. But it is not simply a mathematical formula. In every written constitution that I know, two thirds/one third is the norm. Indeed, that is the way in which the old South African constitution could be changed, under the legacy of the Statute of Westminster laid down by this Parliament. If it was good enough then, it is good enough now.

For de Klerk to insist on 25 per cent. is to insist that he retains the white veto and control and power over events in South Africa. The ANC moved to 70 per cent./30 per cent. but still de Klerk would not move. If we are to have a decent future for South Africa, we must get it right and make sure that there is a proper democracy. That apparently is the position of the Government who agreed to the United Nations declaration on South Africa in respect of a one person, one vote democracy. The Government must stand by that.

When President de Klerk released prisoners—not all of them have been released, by the way—he said that he had not travelled on the road to Damascus and been converted: he was abandoning apartheid and its institutions because he knew that they were not working. That was because of external pressure. It is absolutely necessary that there is external pressure.

The European Council of Ministers agreed to consider the situation in South Africa. It agreed to send a mission composed of the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Portugal and the United Kingdom to look at the situation. At Question Time yesterday, the Foreign Secretary told me that when the time is right we will send them. The time is now right to send them. The situation must be acted upon —President de Klerk is saying, "I shall accept an interim Government," which is one of the demands of the ANC, but he wants the interim Government to be in place before there are agreements about the election of a constituent assembly or elections for a proper Parliament. Those matters must be resolved if we are to proceed. It is absolutely no use the Foreign Secretary saying, "Let us wait."

There have been movements in South Africa because of external pressure. President de Klerk said so—he admitted it. We must maintain that external pressure. People from all parts of South Africa say that we must act if we are to achieve progress. Progress is essential. People say to me, "You cannot possibly ask for sanctions to be reimposed." We took them off too early. We tempted President de Klerk to believe that he could play it long. Leaving the violence aside, his strategy was to stretch out the process, to weaken the credibility of the ANC and to weaken its organisational ability in the hope that, having formed an electoral pact with Buthelezi and Inkatha, when the election finally came round he would have enough votes in the new Parliament still to control events. That has been his plan. It has been like stretching a piece of elastic—the more one stretches it, the thinner it becomes. President de Klerk must remember that the danger is that, if one stretches a piece of elastic too far, it snaps.

We are at a moment of extreme danger in a desperately difficult situation. Some of us have seen moments in history when failure to act properly has led to cataclysmic consequences. I give only two examples—I am sure that hon. Members could give many more. We should look at what happened in the Lebanon—a prosperous country, well thought of, economically successful, but now collapsed into total disaster. Also, there is the current tragedy which is unfolding in Yugoslavia. That country is slipping into a desperate situation. There are many other examples.

*[Mr. Robert Hughes]*

I have never been one who exaggerated, sought to play Cassandra or sought to look for trouble in South Africa. I certainly have no desire to be proved right, but we are at a desperate moment, almost looking into the abyss. I do not want to be proved right. Those of us who have been involved in South African affairs for many years love South Africa and the South African people much too much to ignore their desperate situation, but, if we do not act, disaster will face us.

Now is the time for the British Government to rally their courage and strength, rally the courage of the European Community, and rally the strength of the international community. We must act swiftly, decisively and with courage. If we fail, no one will like the circumstances. If we act well, we can act with great honour and produce a South Africa which is democratic, and free and one which we would wish to prosper.

8.19 pm

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): First, I wish to put it on the record that, despite what many have said about Churchill's comments about Europe, on 11 May 1953 in the House he said:

"Nor do we intend to be merged in a Federal European system."—[*Official Report* 11 May 1953; Vol. 515, c.891.]

My opposition to the Maastricht treaty is based on three main points—its inherent contradictions, its undemocratic principles and the damage that it would do to British and European interests and stability in Europe and the world.

The first point is the inherent contradictions. It is claimed that the treaty will decentralise through the application of the principle of subsidiarity. We could avoid all the problems described by the former President of the European Court of Justice as "gobbledegook" and all the difficulties that we have gone into today, simply by setting out as we did in the Scottish Devolution Bill in 1978, a list of functions showing where the provisions of the treaty would apply.

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones):** I shall not detain my hon. Friend for long. Surely he accepts that article 3b of the treaty of Maastricht is not in the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, which he supported.

**Mr. Cash:** Absolutely. I am delighted to tell my right hon. Friend that under no circumstances would I have supported that Act if it had included the subsidiarity provision. The concept is a deliberate attempt to confuse and obscure the provisions in the Maastricht treaty. What is more, no reputable legal opinion or authority says anything to the contrary.

Indeed, the provisions concentrate vital decisions on monetary and economic policy in the hands of the central bank within the context of the amendments to the treaty of Rome. Jurisdiction over the bank will be concentrated in the European Court of Justice. The Bank of International Settlements said only two weeks ago that the whole thing was completely hopeless. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister is aware of that.

Furthermore, the common provisions set out in title 1 state specifically:

"The union shall be served by a single institutional framework . . . building upon the acquis communautaire."

Those last words are extremely important to anyone who understands what is going on. That is reinforced by the preamble to the treaty, which confirms its objectives.

Yet another centralising feature of the treaty is the establishment of citizenship of the union. Unspecified duties are imposed on those citizens. My right hon. Friend, who is speaking to the Box, undoubtedly seeking advice, replied to a written answer only today. I asked what specific duties were to be imposed on the citizens of the union, including those in the United Kingdom, under the Maastricht treaty.

I received the most amazing reply only an hour ago. He said:

"The provisions . . . added to the treaty . . . which establish citizenship of the union refer to 'duties' imposed by the treaty of Rome, but do not themselves impose any specific duties."

Here comes the crunch point. He said:

"The treaty of Rome in general, as amended by the Maastricht treaty, imposes no duties which do not flow from the direct effect of EC law."

I put that on a par with the definition of subsidiarity.

The article on subsidiarity concedes the centralising effects of the treaty. As a French official said to *The Independent* only yesterday, subsidiarity is a federalist concept. That was reported in *The Independent* today. We know what will be within the exclusive competence of the Community because those matters are clearly set out in the proposed amendments to the treaty of Rome, including those which relate to the cental bank and citizenship of the union. It is therefore assumed that those matters can be better dealt with by the Community. So subsidiarity will apply only to the lesser functions of the Community. It will not apply to the vital and central functions mentioned in the treaty.

I do not understand why we have to be told that black is white when everything is in black and white in the treaty. We need do no more than look at the treaty. It may be argued that we have not yet accepted the provisions for creating a central bank through our own protocol, but we have accepted in another protocol that we will not veto those provisions. The movement to the third stage is "irreversible" and will come into effect irrevocably and irreversibly on 1 January 1999. By then, and probably by 1 January 1997, we must have decided whether we are in or out.

We have conceded the principle of economic and monetary union for the European Community as a whole and the legal framework which it prescribes. That is as much a political as an economic decision. It is a decision about the future government of the United Kingdom and the European Community.

Secondly, I object to the undemocratic nature of the decisions in the Maastricht treaty. We have had no White Paper. We have been given no reasons for the decisions. We did not have a free vote on Second Reading. Even in 1970 and 1972 we were given both reasons and a vote. That undemocratic nature, combined with the fundamental impact on our Parliament and, at the level closest to our voters and citizens, freedom to choose one's economic and social priorities at general elections and to express consent for the way in which one is governed, leads me to deny my support to the Maastricht treaty.

If we had a referendum we should put one main issue to the people of Britain. We should ask, "Do you want to govern yourselves?" It would be easy for my right hon. Friend the Minister to prepare a question about the

Maastricht treaty. I do not suggest that my question uses the exact wording. But the essential nature of the question that must be put to the people would have to be by whom they wished to be governed.

The provisions on economic and monetary union are not so clear cut as many people seem to think. The central bankers would be unelected, independent and unaccountable, all in the name of price stability. We can and should achieve price stability for ourselves in co-operation with our European partners, but no more than that. The central bankers could not guarantee that they would attain their objectives. If they failed, no one could turn them out, even though they may have created massive turmoil in Europe by the changes that they imposed through the powers given by the central banking mechanism and the constitution that they inherited. Our democracy is genuinely at stake in the treaty.

My third objection is the damage that the treaty will do. It is primarily based on thinking which stems from the cold war, the 1950s, the period before the unification of Germany. We need a policy for the 1990s and the next century. The treaty will not contain Germany. It will enhance Germany's dominance in Europe, which is already shown by the fact that 85 per cent. of foreign investment in eastern Europe is German. The trade balance is in Germany's favour throughout the region.

Countries with an adverse trade balance cannot reasonably be expected to vote against Germany. Half of all western credits to Russia are held by Germany. There is a long list of German assertiveness which has accumulated in the past few years. That is unhealthy and bad for Germany as well as for Europe. It is certainly bad for the United Kingdom. There is deep anxiety in British industry and the City about the exchange rate mechanism and the high interest rates that we carry in the wake of the deutschmark. All those issues are directly linked to Maastricht, which would make membership of the ERM a legal obligation. But the ERM is costing jobs and the position is getting worse.

The Single European Act is not the centralising measure that it is claimed to be. Many hon. Members who criticise it now voted rigorously for it. The problems arise from the Commission's misuse of the Single European Act. A serious omission at Maastricht was not to insist on procedures to nip that abuse in the bud. The playing field is increasingly not level. Greater attention must be given to the calls by British industry to stop the unfair subsidies and practices of which it complains. Those practices crucify our prospects for recovery and open us up to acquisitions without fair reciprocity.

The Delors 2 package derives directly from the competences granted under the Maastricht treaty. We can best defeat the Commission's call for more money and cohesion funds by rejecting the treaty. As well as the immigration proposals, the problems and contradictions inherent in them, and the simultaneous attempt to decentralise—so that we cannot square the circle—there is also the difficulty of foreign policy. The title on the foreign policy section is a prescription for confusion and uncertainty. The joint action plan and the European guidelines would lead to chaos that would prevent us from securing peace in the world.

8.30 pm

**Miss Joan Lestor** (Eccles): I was a Euro-sceptic in the old days, but when the referendum confirmed Britain's wish to stay in Europe, there was one pro-European argument that appealed to me, and still does. If we widened Europe, people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds would come together, nationalism and national barriers would be broken down and the rise of xenophobia and racism in Europe would be avoided. That was the one good argument of the pro-Europeans, although it was never their main argument.

In the Labour party document "Opportunities for All" we stressed the need to amend the treaty of Rome to ensure that other countries in Europe followed the lead that we gave in the 1960s and introduced laws to outlaw racial discrimination in employment, housing and other sectors. That policy was part of our manifesto commitment during the last general election.

We could see—I understood clearly—the dangers of free movement of labour for nationals of each EC country. We still face that danger whatever happens to the Maastricht treaty. I know that the Commission for Racial Equality has corresponded with the Government on that subject and there seems to be confusion over whether the EC has competence to legislate on racial matters. If it does not, we must amend the treaty of Rome so that other countries at least abide by the basic discrimination laws in this country, which I wish to see enhanced, as does the Commission for Racial Equality. During our six-month presidency I would like this country to highlight that subject and begin to argue forcibly for change.

I believe that it is of paramount importance that young people in Europe have the same opportunities, whatever their colour, race or ethnic origin, otherwise the free movement of labour and opportunities for jobs becomes a myth. All of us who care about such issues have been alarmed at and despondent about the rise of xenophobia and racism in Europe. I do not want to exaggerate the problem as it does not exist in many parts of Europe, but we know what has been happening in France recently, and have seen the rise of racism in other parts of Europe.

I accept the argument that the wider Europe becomes, the fewer dangers there are, but unless we take action during our presidency to ensure that our regulations apply to other countries, the notion of the free movement of labour becomes a mockery. It is no good saying that that is a matter for individual countries. Residents in this country with different ethnic origins are at least protected in law. It is no good saying to them, particularly the young —we have many young black and white kids in this country who are already disillusioned because of unemployment—that they should go to Europe where they can find a job as there is free movement of labour, if they have no protection in law and the door is slammed in their face.

The treaty of Rome contains provisions for sexual equality—an issue that many of us have taken up over the years. However, it does not deal with racial equality. It may have been an omission when it was drafted or perhaps people did not foresee the changes that would take place in this country and in Europe. I urge the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the issue seriously.

I have been told to make my speech in six minutes so I must be brief, and as I still have two weeks to go as a Front

*[Miss Joan Lestor]*

Bench spokeswoman, I shall be good and keep to the subject about which I care deeply. There is a problem involving third-country nationals. There are people in this country with the right to work here even though they are not EC nationals. Their position will be jeopardised unless the matter is sorted out and regulated in Europe. I believe that that issue is as important as any other in Europe.

Some of us who were unhappy about moves towards Europe accepted the argument that it was a means to attempt to ensure that people of different backgrounds, origins and colours could come together so that barriers were broken down, wars avoided and everyone worked in harmony to enhance Europe. Many changes have taken place in Europe since the treaty of Rome was signed. If the Government seriously want free mobility of labour and harmonisation, they must not take refuge in saying—as I know that they have—that it is a matter for each EC country to decide for itself. It is not. The laws of one EC country on nationalism, xenophobia and law, affect people in other countries. I hope that during their six-month presidency, the Government will take the matter seriously and take the lead on it, as this country took the lead in outlawing racial discrimination.

8.37 pm

**Mr. James Paice** (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I have listened to almost all the debate and have been amazed by some of the comments I have heard. I can only assume that they were based on incredible naivety and idealism, not reality. We must recognise that we start from where we are, not where we might have been or where we might wish to have been. It is clear that a number of right hon. and hon. Members wished that we were starting from somewhere else, perhaps even outside the treaty of Rome.

During the past few years I have witnessed in amazement the surge towards centralism. The Commission has used—some would say abused—the concept of removing barriers as a way to intervene in the minutiae of life and to harmonise all that we do without questioning whether we need regulation. Therefore, I share concern at the direction in which Europe has moved.

My anxiety is reflected throughout my constituency, as I am sure it is throughout those of most hon. Members. Constituents are surprised to find that the EC is involved with the flavour of crisps or chips, and are equally amazed to find that EC law prevents us from taking certain action. Conversely, many people have recourse to EC law when they believe that our Government have not acted correctly.

When I was a member of the Select Committee on Employment I was astonished to hear Madam Papandreou say that she intended to use the majority voting procedures on health and safety provisions as a means of forcing through the social charter. That threat has now come to pass. The House must recognise that that happened due to insufficient control and accountability in the Commission over the past few years. Understandably, the Commission has taken every opportunity created by that vacuum to allow centralism to flourish. I dare say that, had they been Commissioners, the vast majority of hon. Members would have acted in precisely the same way. The vacuum was caused by the Single European Act and the original treaty, both of which failed adequately to ensure levels of accountability and responsibility, and created the opportunity for centralism to grow—the problem that we now face.

It is from that position that we now address the future. Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who perversely applaud the Danes for saving the powers of the House would do well to remember that, in the absence of a Maastricht Bill, or until an alternative is found, we are left in the same position that has caused the problems of centralism during the past few years.

When my right hon. Friends face the challenge that they are embarking upon during our presidency of the Commission, they must tackle many issues, and I shall expand upon one of them—enlargement of the Community. I have always thought it wrong and an affront that we should take unto ourselves the term "European Community" while the majority of the continent of Europe is excluded from it. I look forward to the day when the rest of Scandinavia and the emerging democracies of central and eastern Europe join the Community. That day is still many years away for some of those countries, but we must ensure that we do not construct a framework which prevents or inhibits their accession when the opportunity arrives.

If and when the Community consists of 15, 20 or even more members, other factors will come into play. We shall have to reconsider the structure of the Community, and the role of majority voting.

As we have heard, the Maastricht treaty brought into being the concept of intergovernmental agreements—the pillar approach, which was pioneered by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It also featured the decision by my right hon. Friend—and its acceptance by other member states—for the United Kingdom not to agree to the social chapter or to commit ourselves to European monetary union at this time. Those two features are important, not merely because of our stance, but because the principle that member states have the last word was accepted at Maastricht. I suggest that those will be essential features in an enlarged Community of 15, 20 or more members. Member states will not be committed to each and every policy action and it would not otherwise be possible for such a Europe to progress. The pillar approach is the only one which can encompass a Community representing the continent of Europe.

The Danish referendum has created a major challenge for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—I am sure that most of us have some sympathy with him—which he would rather not have had to face. There are many other important priorities for our presidency. However, the challenge does not create the opportunity to go back to square one, and anyone who believes that we can do so —as some of my hon. and right hon. Friends clearly do —shows little understanding of international negotiations. No one ever gets everything they want out of every negotiation. Clearly aspects of the Maastricht treaty are not as we would all wish. I am not happy about every aspect of it, but it would be living in cloud cuckoo land to believe that everything could be perfect.

The delay gives my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the opportunity to amplify and clarify clauses in the treaty which give concern. For instance, it could amplify the meaning of the term "an ever closer union" in article A. Perhaps more significantly it could also amplify the subsequent statement, which has been given scant attention by critics of the treaty,

"in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen."

That is a clear indicator of the concept of subsidiarity.

The new article 3b has been amply discussed, but we need to ensure that it is clearly understood and clarified.

Europewide decision making is essential in some areas of policy—for example, the environment. Aspects of the environment that know no national boundaries, such as air, river and sea pollution and global warming, require decisions to be taken at European level. Equally, it is totally absurd for decisions to be taken on local planning issues at European level—I cite the interference by the former Commissioner Ripa di Meana in our road programme as an example. We did not get it right with the M3 and we should have tunnelled under Twyford down, but it was for our Government to make that decision. It was not a matter for Europe and it is of no consequence to the rest of Europe.

**Mr. Harry Barnes** (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

**Mr. Paice:** I shall not give way as I have only one minute left.

There is much in the treaty that it would be crazy to lose and much more that would meet with the approval and fulfil the aspirations of our people, with amplification and clarification. We cannot expect the Danes to reverse their decision or to have another referendum without something substantive to cause it. At the very least we need a protocol and perhaps a redrafting, but renegotiation is not on.

I am convinced that the treaty of Maastricht is a turning point in the evolution of Europe. Its advances must not be lost. It is a move away from centralism and towards that Europe of many nations in which I believe. It is an opportunity for individual cultures to flower, strengthened by a clearly defined framework of co-operation and of tiered powers.

Let us not be under any illusions—I know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is not: until we have Maastricht or an alternative, the Community will flounder, as it is now doing. In the coming months, it must be our prime consideration to ensure that we take the action necessary to ratify Maastricht or to provide an ideal alternative so that its advances are not lost.

8.45 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief speech in this important debate. Those hon. Members who have sat through the debate will perhaps be disappointed. Hon. Members who have stayed obviously have strong views on the issue, but I had hoped that more hon. Members would have stayed to listen to the arguments. I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) that Maastricht is a significant aspect of what will happen to the United Kingdom and Europe.

I hope that there will be further debates and that hon. Members will not postpone the opportunity to speak until the Government have the confidence to bring the Maastricht Bill back to the House for a Committee stage, but will take other opportunities to debate where we are and where we are going.

I speak on behalf of two nationalist parties tonight—Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party. It is important that hon. Members understand why nationalists view Europe as a way forward, while many in this Parliament, who represent what I would call the unionist parties, are frightened of Europe. My party fights under the flagship policy of independence in Europe, which was passed by a 9:1 majority at our annual conference. We have argued the case for an independent Scotland, within the European Community, because we believe that independence and sovereignty should be valued by every community and nation and that we can decide what to pool for the greater benefit of the European Community and of the world.

Sincerely, those people who say that Maastricht is a treaty too far are a generation too late. Young people who think of themselves as Scots, English, Welsh, Irish, French, German or whatever also think of themselves as Europeans. I regularly visit schools in my constituency. More than anything I am impressed by our youngsters' knowledge of the European Community and by the international dimension that they place on their lives. That should be nurtured by each and every one of us.

The European Community was formed to build bridges, to ensure peace and to ensure that there would be no more starvation. Okay, we have not achieved all those objectives—as yet, we are a poor framework of what could be achieved—but the principles which underpinned the founding of the Community should be valued.

I listened with much wry humour to those hon. Members who argue about sovereignty in this place. What kind of sovereignty are we arguing about at Westminster? Seventy-two Scottish Members represent Scottish constituencies, with their diverse problems, their very particular issues, which affect the daily lives of our constituents. We are told that this is the mother of Parliaments, the essence of democracy. Yet, if by some quirk of fate all 72 Scottish Members were to walk through the Division Lobby together, we could still be defeated. That is what happens in this Parliament.

I say to those who argue that this is the essence of democracy and Westminster is the mother of Parliaments that it fails very badly in representing the viewpoints of many of our constituents, our nations and the regions of England. I am one of the people who believe that if Scotland were to become a self-governing country it would trigger reform in this place which would benefit the regions of England, which suffer a great deal from centralisation.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South) *rose*——

**Mrs. Ewing:** No. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has been in Committee—we are on the same Standing Committee—but I have a very short time in which to make my points.

As a graduate in history from two Scottish universities, I would say that we stand at a crossroads in defining where we want to go as individuals, as nation states, as regions. I believe that there are massive opportunities, but many people fail to recognise the historical significance of where we are.

Reference was made to the gold standard. I thought that that had been consigned to the economic dustbin. We have an opportunity to change the world, to change the Community of which we are a part. There is no rule of immutability in history and I believe that we are standing at a crossroads. Many people would wish to return to an imperialist tradition. They would prefer to see a wall built through the middle of Berlin; they would prefer to see an iron curtain still in existence. That was cosy and comfortable. They could live at ease with that situation.

*[Mrs. Ewing]*

We have a challenge before us to develop the European Community and we should meet it, each and every Member, instead of trying to retreat into the dark imperialist past.

Changes must come by consensus. The treaty of Rome made it clear that any major change must be agreed by everyone. It does not matter whether it is a nation of 5 million people or of 15 million people; everyone must be treated equally. I was pleased that the Foreign Secretary revealed that the principle of unanimity would not be ignored in the major changes. Article 236 of the original treaty laid down clear guidelines on which we should proceed at this stage. The views of the Danish people, the Irish people and the French people must all be taken into account and dealt with equally.

Hon. Members keep talking about referendums. You and I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having been in the House for two or three decades—in my case, off and on—remember well the arguments about referendums in the 1970s. My problem is not that I am opposed to referendums in principle—indeed, my party has written into its constitutional policy the idea that referendums should be part and parcel of the democratic process in an independent Scotland—but that referendums seem to be seized upon by people because they think that they will get the answer that they want at any given stage. In other words, they represent a cynical approach to the issue of democracy.

I shall refer here to the words of another Margaret, who I gather is making a speech in another place today. Back in March 1975, looking at the issue of a referendum on the European treaties, she said that if we were to adopt referendums, that would mean going as far as having a written constitution, and obviously many hon. Members do not want a written constitution. If we are to have referendums, I believe that they should be part of a written constitution, that they should be held under clear guidelines and that they should not be able to be rigged in any way, be it through financial support or through the infamous 40 per cent. rule which we had in Scotland in 1979.

Just as a matter of interest, under the 40 per cent. rule Ireland would have said no to Maastricht, because only 39·4 per cent. of the Irish electorate said yes. Yet that has been heralded by the supporters of Europe as a major triumph. If there is to be a referendum on this matter, it must be held under very clear guidelines, it must be clearly understood by the people, they must know exactly what is happening and the questions that are being asked, and the fullest consultation must take place.

The Committee of the Regions is often held up as an example of subsidiarity. I say very clearly to those on the Government Front Bench that I do not see the Committee of the Regions as a substitute for a Scottish Parliament, with the rights of Scotland being equal to those of Denmark, Germany, France or any other nation state in the European Community. I do not believe that an advisory body with limited powers will in any way advance the cause of the Scottish people.

8.56 pm

**Mr. Gerald Malone** (Winchester): I very much doubt whether it is possible to be a maiden voice in the House as I rise on this occasion to speak for the first time as the Member for Winchester. I hope that the House will indulge me if I say a word or two about my constituency, which is of course the ancient capital of England. It is a great privilege to represent it. It is a very popular seat. More Conservative candidates were contesting Winchester than, I believe, any other constituency in the country. I think that is some testimony to its popularity.

I will say no more of my predecessor than that he was a man who fought a good election campaign in Winchester at the last election and enjoyed a certain reputation both in the House and in the constituency. One of my other predecessors fought very hard on my behalf in Winchester. Some Members of the House will remember with great affection Rear-Admiral Sir Morgan Morgan-Giles. I would say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that in the six months of our presidency of the Community they should perhaps bear in mind one of his maxims. I hope they will not mind if I quote it to them; it may well stand them in good stead. The rear-admiral was very well known for saying in Winchester and, I think, in the House: "Pro bono publico, no bloody panico." If my right hon. and hon. Friends can keep that maxim in mind through what may well be stormy days during the course of the next six months, it may be of some considerable benefit.

I believe that the Government face a great challenge, which they are taking on in their presidency from a great victory that they achieved in the course of the Maastricht treaty negotiations. The victory was essentially that, no matter what one may say about the details we have heard about in the House today and some of the probably genuine concerns about where Maastricht may lead us, it has made the Community a totally different place. We now see that there is a move away from centralisation. That is one of the most fundamentally important aspects of what has been negotiated. We see that subsidiarity is a doctrine that will get rid of one of the most terrible tendencies of the EC—to interfere in matters which were of no relevance to it.

Throughout the period of Britain's presidency, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear in mind a number of important points. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary begin his remarks today with the GATT round. It has been an astonishingly disappointing failure that we have not been able to reach agreement in the Uruguay round. We may go on as much as we like in this House and in Europe about helping the third world, aid budgets and matters of that sort, but if we refuse to give trade, giving aid is no use. I wish my right hon. and hon. Friends well in all their attempts, which I hope they will press hard, to secure a rapid result in the GATT round so that it produces not the sort of stalemate that we have now but real benefits.

There is a historic challenge that has not been mentioned in the debate but which I hold to be of great importance. There is a danger in the course of the next decade or so that the United States will disengage from Europe in a number of ways, not only in the formation of its foreign policy but in a practical way in its participation

in the defence of Europe and in its treatment of the EC in trade matters. We have seen much of that risk in the present impasse over the GATT round.

I hope that some reassuring messages will go from our presidency to the United States in a number of ways. First, I hope that it will be made clear that experiments with French and German military corps being looked upon as the pillar of defence in Europe will gain no credibility. The real pillar of defence in Europe is NATO and will continue to be so. It has been French policy for decades to try to exclude the Americans from European defence in some shape or form. I hope that that will not be given truck and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will give that clear message.

I also hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take into account a message that came from the Bank for International Settlements' report for 1992 which clearly showed that there is fear in the wider world that the sort of EC that we will continue to build will be inward looking. There is no point in dismantling internal trade barriers if the Community puts up external trade barriers and is seen as a trading bloc which will not negotiate or talk with other trading blocs throughout the world. That would be extremely damaging, and I hope that every effort will be made to make that message as clear as possible to the rest of the world community.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made the message of Maastricht clear not only to Britain but to other European countries as well, where it was heard for the first time. I am not in the least surprised that the message that he put across during the negotiations is now being heard by the German, French and Danish publics. His message was one of a very different Europe from the one to which we were being pushed before we actively began to participate in the affairs of the EC.

It has taken a long time to turn that attitude round, but my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has now managed to do that. He has managed to make it clear that this is a Europe that will concentrate on the essentials of European policy where it counts and will return to nation states areas of responsibility where it does not matter whether Brussels or anybody else in Europe has overall control.

I hope that, when my right hon. Friend replies, we will hear some examples of where subsidiarity may pay dividends. Let me suggest one case which is a constituency point. We have already heard from one of my hon. Friends about the environment and the M3, which is in my constituency. It is an outrage that the European Commission should think that it should have any view at all on a motorway in the heart of my constituency. It is absurd. It is as pointless as my having a view about what happens in an urban motorway system round Rome. It is irrelevant and it is something that we can now move away from.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): But it does.

**Mr. Malone:** In the long term, it no longer will, because subsidiarity will clearly mean that decisions on matters of that kind will once again be the priority of this Government and will be dealt with exclusively in the House. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able to reassure us on that when he replies and say that that will indeed be the case and give us some practical examples to flesh out a concept which has been challenged but which I believe will be much more acceptable once we can see some practical instances of the way in which it will apply.

I wish my right hon. Friend and his colleagues well in their presidency. They have a difficult task. I am sure that by the end of it they will have the treaty firmly back on the rails, and I am sure that the House will give it the endorsement that it already has. I see no reason why the views of the House should change. I am sure that when my right hon. Friend replies he will convince many of the sceptics here that the flesh of subsidiarity will be an important matter for the future.

9.4 pm

**Mr. John Fraser** (Norwood): It is 25 years since I was last called to comment generally about Europe. As I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) intends to rise at 10 minutes past 9 o'clock, I shall restrict my comments to two narrow points.

I negotiated a number of European directives, and I found that they all involved some standardisation, harmonisation, or uniformity. That did not give me any problems when I dealt with directives on equal pay, weights and measures, and mass redundancy.

Whatever we do, the Community will go on creating common standards and common rights. That is not something to which we should object. It is impossible to run a major trading system and assure workers of equal rights in different countries unless there is some standardisation.

Europe is capable of creating common rights and uniformity, and within the strength of that union it is then capable of creating diversity. The two can go hand in hand. The Community can demonstrate to eastern Europe that the European passport can also be the right to be different.

All the major world languages—French, Spanish, and English—are minority languages in Europe. We must develop a Community that pays greater attention to minority rights in terms of language, other forms of culture, scripts—be they roman or cyrillic—traditions, religions, and so on.

The Community must guarantee minority rights so that we will all feel more free. We ought to speak about the flowering not only of cultures of nation states but of the cultures of parts of nation states. That applies to this country as much to any other, and our example will make it easier for the countries of eastern Europe to enter the Community. It is, however, a pity that, as we have developed diversity within the Community, eastern European countries outside it felt the necessity to pull apart.

My second point concerns immigration. It is disgraceful that, in the last day or so, secret negotiations have been conducted between nation states on a common immigration policy. There may be a good reason for common rules covering the admission of new member states, particularly if there is to be free movement throughout the Community. However, it is scandalous that those proposals should not be made known to the House, other Parliaments within the Community, and the European Parliament.

The rights of migrant workers are in some cases farcical or disgraceful. If I wanted a wife to come to Britain from

*[Mr. John Fraser]*

a country outside the Community, she would normally have no absolute right to do so unless she could pass the primary purpose rule. Nor would I normally have any absolute guarantee of gaining admission for my children.

I happen to have that right because my grandmother was born in Ireland and I am therefore an Irish citizen. If I were to register in the United Kingdom as an Irish citizen and exercised my Community rights, my wife, children, parents, and almost every other member of my family would be entitled to enter this country without let or hindrance. It cannot be right to have that differentiation and to demote the migration and immigration rights of people born in this country.

If there is to be an approximation of the rights of immigrants in the Community, let it be an approximation upwards rather than downwards. Let us have the proposals on the table, let us understand them, and let us work towards widening the rights of those who live and work in various parts of the Community as well as those who stay in one country. I am sure that the Home Secretary, like me, is surprised that these matters are secret as they are of enormous importance to many constituencies, particularly mine. I hope that we shall return to this matter on another occasion.

9.10 pm

**Mr. John Smith** (Monklands, East): In this debate, which we have about every six months, we have an opportunity to review developments in the European Community on a wider front. The House is indebted to hon. Members on both sides who have drawn attention to a very large number of issues. It was wise of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) to draw attention to the problem of racism and its connection with unemployment, as it was wise of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) to draw attention to the opportunities for the European Community to assist with regard to the situation in South Africa. We have also had the benefit of a maiden speech from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), who generously paid tribute to his predecessor, Sylvia Heal, who was the victor in that remarkable by-election. The hon. Gentleman revealed that he is a Russian speaker. No doubt we shall hear from him in foreign policy debates in the future.

This debate is given added relevance by the fact that it occurs right at the start of the British presidency. It is not surprising that quite a number of contributions have concentrated on what should occur during the period of the British presidency. It is right for the House to consider what the Government propose as the agenda for the presidency, as well as what the community needs at this stage in its development. In a number of important respects the Government's agenda and the needs of the Community do not coincide. I do not in any way dispute the importance of enlargement, or of subsidiarity, or of settling the budget, or of completing the single market process, or of seeking a much more co-ordinated approach to the alarming events in what was once Yugoslavia. It is not so much what is included that is significant as what has been left out.

The Government's complacency over the condition of the British economy seems to have led them to the view that achieving economic growth and much better levels of employment should not be a priority for the British presidency or for the Community as a whole. We in the Opposition profoundly disagree with their approach. Getting back on the road to economic growth, recovering from recession and tackling rising unemployment ought to be major priorities for the Community and should seem to be so by the country that holds the presidency.

I regret to say that what we have heard in this debate and in previous statements by the Prime Minister and his colleagues shows that the crucial importance of these economic issues is not grasped by the Government. It ought to be an employment and growth presidency.

Such objectives are vital to Britain—languishing as we are in a debilitating recession, and having the weakest economic performance in the whole Community. They are, of course, vital to the Community. If we do not achieve sustained growth and maintain high levels of employment, the success of the Community as a political, economic and social enterprise will inevitably be undermined. If the economic performances of member states differ widely, the tendency will be for the Community to fragment rather than join together.

Why, then, is it that the Government do not appreciate the significance of these issues? It may well be that their own disengagement from the problems of the British economy has led them to the erroneous belief that a similar stance is desirable at Community level. It may also be that their own embarrassment about the failure of their economic policy in Britain, and the continued non-appearance of the frequently promised economic recovery, has made them coy about adopting a more positive approach. They certainly have grounds for embarrassment about their economic policy.

Today's *Financial Times* contains an interesting article by Mr. Philip Stephens about attitudes to the economy among Ministers and other Conservative Members. Clearly, unease about the failure of Government economic policy is growing, not just in the country but in the ranks of the Conservative party. Mr. Stephens observes:

"Most Conservative MPs believed their pre-election claims that victory would provide the final ingredient for economic recovery."

The writer does not state whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in that category; we shall leave that point aside for now, and the Chancellor can tell us himself when he winds up the debate.

Mr. Stephens goes on to analyse the situation thus:

"Three months on, they have become bemused and uneasy about the stubbornness of the recession. The anecdotal evidence in their constituencies—from bankruptcies, unemployment and house prices—confirms the aggregate indicators that have prompted the Treasury to scrap its forecast that the economy will grow this year . . . Suggestions that recession might yet turn into slump are no longer dismissed with quite such breezy confidence. The concern is shared in the highest reaches of the government."

I dare say that that may even include the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"'Pretty awful' and 'dangerous' are just two of the grisly descriptions of the short-term economic outlook offered during the past few days by cabinet members."

Mr. Philip Stephens is a journalist of some repute. Clearly, members of the Cabinet are unburdening themselves to him about what they consider to be the true position of the British economy, and clearly there is deep unease—as there ought to be—among Conservative Members. I am not surprised that such concerns exist,

because they are corroborated by the facts. Britain suffered from the lowest economic growth in the entire economic Community in 1991, and it is forecast that it will occupy exactly the same lowly position in 1992. That is the OECD's assessment—revealed in its latest report, published on 21 June. The same report shows that we had the worst record for job creation in 1990 and 1991, and that the same is forecast for 1992.

As if that were not bad enough, ours was the worst investment performance in the entire Community in 1990 and 1991, and again the same is forecast for 1992. It is predicted that in 1992 investment will not increase, but will fall by 3·8 per cent. So much for the much talked about recovery from recession, which we were told would be the direct, inevitable result of a Conservative election victory.

As he contemplates those woeful circumstances, the Chancellor's mind may go back to his first significant statement as Chancellor of the Exchequer. In November 1990, he informed the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that the recession would be—I use his well-known words—"shallow" and "shortlived". *[Interruption.]* He said it, and I do not think that he is disposed to deny it.

Not long after that, warming to his theme, the Chancellor assured us that recovery would occur at the end of the first half of 1991. Not only would it be shallow and shortlived but it would be shortlived enough to have come to an end by the middle of 1991. Here we are, smack bang in the middle of 1992, one year later, and the Chancellor's promised recovery is as far away as ever.

I have little doubt that the manifest unease in his party will have been much increased among those who considered his speech to Surrey business men on 17 June, when he said:

"In two or three years time I believe that people will look back and see that it was now, during this critical period, that the right decisions were taken."

Some of course will think, given the Chancellor's record, that his powers of accurate economic prediction should not be overestimated. Others will, I think, shudder at the implication that recovery, already at least one year late, is not likely definitely to have occurred until at least two or three years from now.

The Government's failure to put growth on either the national or the Community agenda is in marked contrast to the approach being adopted by the United States to the Munich summit of the G7 that is to take place next week. Treasury Secretary Brady is reported, again in today's *Financial Times*, as having stated:

"A top priority for the United States . . . was to agree measures to strengthen global growth."

He implied, said the *Financial Times*, that

"this was central to all else the G7 leaders might want to achieve. We're talking about a communique that is going back to the concept of a growing world."

We are entitled to ask why the concept of a growing Europe is not included in the objectives of the British presidency when the importance of the issue is so clearly understood by other members of the G7.

Europe needs a strategy for growth and employment. In our view, the British Government should put on the agenda measures, on a Community wide basis, to encourage and stimulate investment, to enhance and expand training and to increase employment opportunities. They ought to be a central feature in the creation of the single market, which should be seen not just as an area of economic deregulation but as an engine of growth and better economic and social opportunity.

On investment and growth, the immediate problem that faces us is high levels of real interest rates throughout the Community, not least in this country. These have partly been caused by the costs of German reunification and the consequent policies adopted by the German Government. To overcome the inhibitions on investment and growth flowing from Germany's domestic economic situation, the Community should consider the strong case for co-ordinated interest rate cuts in every member state. To achieve that objective, the members of the exchange rate mechanism should consider, if it is necessary to do so, and upward revaluation of the deutschmark against all the other currencies.

**Mr. Cash:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Smith:** I am trying to develop my argument at this point, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Cash:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman is talking about interest rates and our linkage to the deutschmark. Does he think that we should suggest to Germany that it might like to increase its taxation in order to ensure that it provides the necessary money, or does he think that we might come out of the exchange rate mechanism?

**Mr. Smith:** There is a case for saying to the Germans that they might deal with the problem by increasing taxation rather than by having the tight monetary policy that they now follow. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman understands that the domestic implication is Conservative recognition of the case for higher levels of taxation. He ought to bear that in mind in his political approach to the issue.

It should be remembered that the exchange rate mechanism is a fixed but also an adjustable system and that a long time has passed since the last realignment in 1987.

It is worth considering whether the highly unusual circumstances of German unification and the impact which the Germans' restricted monetary policy has on the prospects of growth for the whole Community do not justify a concerted strategy to achieve lower interest rates which could involve some realignment of the currencies. Such a move may also be a necessary step to achieve the economic convergence which is so necessary for the long-term viability of the Community and any progress towards economic and monetary union.

Naturally, a substantial part of the debate has centred on the future of the Maastricht treaty following the negative result of the Danish referendum. I think it is significant that one of the key causes of concern about the treaty in Denmark has been the inadequency of the framework of democratic accountability in the treaty's proposals for economic and monetary union.

At Lisbon, the Danish Foreign Minister, Mr. Ellemann-Jensen, said:

"What we need is more democracy in the institutions, more open decision taking."

That view has received consistent support from the Labour party in all its debates, pre- and post-Maastricht. We have consistently argued that the overall responsibility for economic policy must remain with elected Ministers,

*[Mr. Smith]*

accountable to the European Parliament and their own national Parliaments. In particular, we have argued that ECOFIN—the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers—should have the determining role in the shaping and implementation of overall economic policy, including external exchange rate policy.

The proposed European central bank should be made more accountable to ECOFIN as part of that process, and the objectives of the bank should not be an exclusive concern with price stability but should embrace the wider economic objectives of the union as set out in article 2 of the treaty, which defines them as follows:

"sustainable non-inflationary growth respecting the environment, a high degree of convergence of economic performance, a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States."

I am sure that the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) does not agree about economic and social cohesion and solidarity among member states, but we regard it as one of the important purposes of the European Community, and it is extremely important that it is set out so clearly in article 2 of the treaty.

Therefore, we suggest that a useful initiative during the British presidency would be a better and clearer definition of the important role which ECOFIN must have to preserve democratic accountability and political control. In the intergovernmental conference discussions, the Government gave that aspect insufficient priority, but they have an opportunity in the next six months to put that right. There is concern not only in Denmark but throughout the Community that the democratic deficit needs to be tackled by more effective proposals.

It is not enough merely to stress subsidiarity, which is essentially about the level at which decisions are taken. There should also be concern about how the decisions are taken and, in particular, that they are subject to a framework of democratic accountability.

**Mr. Peter Shore:** I have followed very closely what my right hon. and learned Friend has been saying and I wholly endorse what he said about the need for any European central bank or monetary institutions to be subject to political control, but that is not in the treaty now, so what is his conclusion? Is this a treaty which can possibly be accepted by the Opposition without the essential safeguards which my right hon. and learned Friend has mentioned?

**Mr. Smith:** My right hon. Friend follows these matters extremely closely so he will know from my previous statements in the House that I said that I was not happy about the proposals for the European central bank and that I would prefer a more explicit framework of political control. He also knows that I have consistently argued that, if we strengthened ECOFIN and its relationship with the central bank, that would provide a way forward, in which we could achieve greater political control.

I regret that the Government did not pursue that goal, although the French Government did, during negotiations on the treaty. In that regard it is important to note that ECOFIN has control over the external exchange rate of a single currency. That is a step in the right direction. As we look to the future, I am trying to set out objectives for the way in which the EC is to develop in the context of a British presidency, which could have an influence in that direction.

The Government's strategy of concentrating on opt-outs in the intergovernmental conferences meant that less attention was given to those important issues of accountability. Another side effect——

**Mr. Richard Shepherd** (Aldridge-Brownhills) *rose*——

**Mr. Smith:** Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to continue? I am short of time, and I have given an undertaking as to when I shall finish.

Another side effect of the opt-out strategy—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not find these matters too amusing; they are quite important. I wish that he had paid more attention to democratic accountability. It is not good enough to stroll along to the House of Commons, utter a few platitudes and giggle during Opposition speeches. We expect a little more from a Chancellor of the Exchequer in such a debate.

**Sir Peter Tapsell** *rose*——

**Mr. Smith:** No, I must not give way.

A side effect of the opt-out strategy was to make it difficult to secure the location of the European monetary institute—the precursor of the central bank—for the United Kingdom. At Lisbon it looked as if Bonn were being favoured by many member states. I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will take that matter seriously, and will tell us tonight what the Government strategy is for advancing the case for the bank to be located in one of the excellent sites in the United Kingdom. In particular, will he explain the impact of the opt-out on the United Kingdom's capacity to develop a convincing case? Has the Government's handling of the matter not placed a serious impediment in this country's way? The House will expect the Chancellor to address that issue when he replies to the debate.

The other opt-out concerns the social chapter. It is bad enough that Britain alone among the Twelve does not wish to recognise the social dimension which is essential to a balanced approach to the European Community. It is illuminating—but not, I am sorry to say, surprising—to discover that only one Council meeting on social affairs has been scheduled to take place—and that is near the end of the British presidency. The constant and dogmatic downgrading of social affairs damages our interests as well as those of the Community as a whole. The illusion persists in Conservative minds that Britain has not fallen behind the rest of the Community—but everyone else knows that we have.

After Maastricht, the German newspaper *Die Welt* observed of the British opt-out:

"it confirms that by comparison with other European industrial nations, Great Britain is a developing country in the fields of labour law, labour relations and social security".

It is a great pity that we are now collecting such an unflattering identity among the other countries in the EC. So much for being at the heart of Europe.

There is no sense in seeking to attract investment on the basis of low wages and low skills, when investment in today's world seeks to combine with the high skills which create the productivity which produces higher growth,

high wages and better living standards. I regret that, under an opt-out presidency, the next six months will not be noted for progress in social affairs.

We call upon the Government to adopt a more imaginative approach to the responsibilities of the presidency. We urge them to reconsider their failure to give prominence to economic growth and full employment. We urge them to give proper attention to the development of democratic accountability as one of the means of tackling the democratic deficit. Once again, we deplore their failure to recognise that, in rejecting the social chapter and the need for social responsibility to be a major feature of the Community, they are not serving either the interests of the people of this country or the wider needs of the Community.

9.34 pm

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont):** This has been an excellent debate with some outstanding speeches from both sides of the House. As always, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made an outstanding contribution. His speeches do not always seem to go down so well with his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), but we certainly appreciated it.

I also greatly appreciated the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor). Although I did not agree with everything he said, I did not disagree with everything. I know that I speak for everyone who heard his speech when I say that it was remarkable. Everyone on the Conservative Benches warmly respects my hon. Friend for that speech.

We also had a remarkable speech from the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), who said that he might support the Government.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Lamont:** Although the hon. Gentleman expressed a strong objection to what he considered to be the removal of the social element, he did say, despite the fact that he is shaking his head, that he thought that the Maastricht agreement represented a positive approach to Europe. He thought that that approach should be borne strongly in mind.

It is also a great pleasure to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) back to the House and to hear him speak again. He reminded us about the dangers of centralisation and growing bureaucracy in the Community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire also made a maiden speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire"] I am entitled to be confused about the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) because he somewhat startled the House by referring to his constituency as his own banana republic. We were all delighted to listen to his speech and to note what he said about his constituency and the historic people who came from it, including Dr. Johnson.

In common with my hon. Friend the member for Winchester, my hon. Friend went out of his way to warn against what he saw as the dangers of centralisation. As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, my hon. Friend drew on his knowledge of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. He warned us against pushing towards the unification of Europe more than common sense could bear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire asked us to assure him that we did not foresee the Community developing into a super-state. My hon. Friend is well aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said that we want to make absolutely certain that that is not the track on which Europe is destined to go.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred to the unanimity requirement that attaches to the Maastricht treaty, its interaction with the treaty of Rome and the fact that amendments to that treaty can be made only by unanimity. He referred to article 236. I can assure him, as he requested, that we will not develop a strategy to get around the unanimity requirement. I hope that he will accept that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East referred to CAP reform and asked my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary about its costs. That reform will add to public expenditure costs in the United Kingdom, but within the Community the costs will be within the CAP guideline. Overall, the United Kingdom will benefit in resource terms, because, as my hon. Friend understands, two forms of subsidy are implicit in the CAP: one is the subsidy from the taxpayer, but the other is the subsidy obtained through the artificial hiking of prices. The reduction in prices will outweigh the extra public expenditure costs. Therefore, the United Kingdom will be a net beneficiary from the CAP reforms. There will be a net gain to the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) asked about the relationship between cohesion, ratification and enlargement. As he knows, although the link between cohesion and enlargement was not made in the Maastricht treaty, it was made at the time of the Maastricht meeting. The further link between enlargement and ratification was made in Lisbon. As the hon. Gentleman and the House will appreciate, the whole process of enlargement will take time. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear, we have agreement in principle to enlargement. We will be preparing the ground in our presidency for enlargement by negotiations, which will begin next year. The agreement in principle, to which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) referred, was expressed at Lisbon.

Today's debate has provided a welcome chance to set out our priorities for our presidency of the Council. The result of the Danish referendum has sparked a vigorous debate across Europe. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) said, we have the chance now to influence that debate, because it has increased in intensity after what happened in Denmark. As we assume the chair and the presidency, we will have a unique opportunity to try to influence the debate.

This country last held the presidency in 1986. Our task then was to oversee the ratification of the Single European Act and to begin to implement the measures necessary for the single market. It now falls to us to see that programme through and to complete the single market on schedule at the end of 1992. We have the opportunity referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester to see the Community moving in our direction—one where free trade is a reality within the Community and between the Community and the world outside. We want a Europe of

*[Mr. Lamont]*

open markets, not one of red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy. We want a Community that is ready to welcome all European states that meet the conditions of membership and one that is not just confined to being a rich man's club.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester said, what is needed is a Community that does not interfere unnecessarily in the rights of member states to make their own laws and in the rights of peoples and businesses to live and work unhindered by petty regulations and meddling directives. That is why subsidiarity has assumed such importance in the debate and why it will be such a vital consideration.

In the next six months, our priorities will be to pave the way for the early enlargement of the Community; to work for a GATT settlement; to complete the single market; and to reach an agreement on future financing of the Community that contains the Community's spending within acceptable bounds.

The greatest contribution that we in this country have made to the Community is the single market programme. It has been estimated that, over the medium term, the single market could add up to more than 5 per cent. to Community output—some £150 billion—and could create up to 1·8 million jobs. I wish that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East would realise that jobs are created not only by pumping up demand—something that he always wants to do—but by enlarging the single market, by increasing competition and by taking measures that increase the supply side of the European Community. Increasing the number of jobs in the Community involves that, and not just the matters referred to by the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

**Mr. John Smith:** Does the right hon. Gentleman think that the unemployment figures over the past period are a testimony to the success of Conservative economic policy on this matter?

**Mr. Lamont:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about the effect of the election on recovery. We know what would have been the effect on the economy had the Labour party been elected. There would not have been the slightest prospect of recovery had the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his tax plans got into office.

On the single market, I wish to address a point that is of considerable concern to the House. However, before doing so, I emphasise that there is a risk that we take the single market for granted. We assume that all the work has been done and that it will simply happen on 1 January 1993. But that is not the case. Business in this country stands to gain enormously from the single market. If we fail to complete the task, this country will be the loser.

There is, of course, a link between the single market and the difficult and vexed question of majority voting in the Community. As my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher found herself conceding at the time, it would be impossible for the Community to create a single market in Europe without some form of qualified majority voting. If we did not, the directives necessary to break down barriers and open up markets would inevitably be sabotaged by special interests. It has been only by majority voting that we have been able to make the progress that we made, but continued effort is needed, particularly on services.

A prime example of the opportunities available is the package that was secured by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, which will pave the way for the deregulation of air fares within Europe. For far too long, state airlines in Europe have been over-subsidised and ticket prices have been over-regulated. The introduction of competition should help to bring down prices, just as it has in the United States, where internal air fares are far cheaper than in Europe, and they should be much cheaper in Europe.

Equally important are financial services, securities, banking and insurance in respect of which this country is in the lead. We need to ensure that the single market is developed so that we can sell financial services right across Europe. That means setting some common standards across the Community for the protection of investors. But those regulations must not be too onerous or restrict the ability of firms to compete in world markets. At the Economic and Finance Council on Monday, we made major progress towards agreement on two important directives on investment services and capital adequacy. Those proposals would allow British securities and investment businesses to compete across the Community without imposing unacceptable new regulation. That would pave the way for the highly competitive British financial services industry to be able to expand across Europe.

**Mr. Dykes:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the interesting point about those two directives was that they were agreed by majority voting, showing once again that, mostly, that mechanism is actually in the interests of this country, not against it?

**Mr. Lamont:** It was certainly in this country's interest in that particular instance; that is true.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) raised a point that is of concern to the House—the harmonisation of indirect taxes. Our stance has always been clear and has always been based firmly on the Single European Act. We are in favour of binding European law on matters of taxation only to the extent that that is necessary for the completion of the single market. As I explained when I intervened earlier, that attitude mirrors the wording that exists in article 90 of the treaty. However, I have to confess that I sometimes find it difficult to see what some Commission propoals for tax harmonisation actually have to do with the single market. I constantly remind my fellow Finance Ministers that the United States manages to have a very successful internal market with no centrally directed harmonisation of indirect taxes.

We have made some progress in convincing the rest of the community of the validity of that view. The original proposals by Lord Cockfield for tightly constrained harmonised VAT, harmonising the rates of VAT with maxima and minima, are long dead, thanks to British opposition.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Lamont:** I shall give way in a minute, but I wish to make some more progress.

I assure the House that during our presidency I will continue to reject unnecessary and damaging proposals for the harmonisation of taxes. The right hon. Member for Gorton said that, on the minimum rate for VAT, I could

have vetoed the proposals. He seemed to think that we had reached an agreement the other day. I vetoed the proposals that were made at that time. I am determined to preserve the right of Britain to keep our zero VAT rate. That right is currently fully protected by the sixth VAT directive. We shall not accept any proposal that calls it into question.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is worried about VAT, but I assure him that we are convinced that our legal position is watertight, notwithstanding the points that he made.

**Mr. Knapman:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Cash:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Lamont:** If I could make a little more progress, I shall give way later.

The draft VAT rates directive which was under discussion at ECOFIN earlier this week would not have affected our zero rates. Indeed, it would have reinforced our right to retain them after the abolition of fiscal controls at the border. However, it would have provided for a legally binding minimum standard rate. I repeat that that is a long way from the original Cockfield proposal for maxima and minima. The House will recall that we have already accepted minimum excise duty rates.

I remain highly sceptical about whether a minimum rate of VAT is necessary for the creation of the single market, but we must also take account of the views of other countries. I emphasise to my hon. Friends that other member states, especially those with large land boundaries, have real anxieties about the danger to their revenues from cross-border shopping in continental Europe. They fear that indirect tax rates will be forced downwards across Europe, jeopardising their fiscal positions and forcing up direct taxes.

No one in the House is more jealous of our fiscal prerogative than me. That is not merely because I am Chancellor of the Exchequer but because I am a Member of this House. However, VAT has long been subject to Community law. Its structure and coverage are already governed by directives of long standing. Indeed, in 1988 we were forced by the European Court of Justice to extend VAT to non-domestic construction, fuel, power and water. But the directive would not force us to increase any VAT rates.

We must recognise that there is a link between the completion of the single market—the abolition of border and customs controls—and agreement on tax. Other countries that are worried about their tax revenues are not prepared to agree to the completion of the single market without some agreement on indirect tax. It is in our interest that we reach agreements which will enable the single market to be completed and make possible the ending of fiscal controls at borders. It was with that objective firmly in mind that I was prepared to accept a compromise proposal of a binding VAT rate of 15 per cent. for four years. With a review after four years, that would have ensured that the rate was not set in stone for all time.

I remind my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey that our current VAT rate is 17·5 per cent., well above the proposed minimum. So it would not have been likely that our room for manoeuvre in tax policy in the next few years would be constrained. However, that was not enough for the Community and there was no agreement.

Throughout the discussions, I made it clear that it would be possible to agree to any VAT directive only if other essential United Kingdom concerns were met. We have interests in respect of alcoholic drinks and whisky in particular, as the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East knows. That is no personal reference, but the hon. and learned Gentleman has an interest of long standing in the industry near his constituency.

We have been anxious not to introduce a regime in the Community which forces other countries to increase excise duties on products produced in Britain. The House will understand that we must balance industrial interests with the principles of fiscal sovereignty that we wish to retain.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Cash:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Lamont:** I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey, because he raised the matter first.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his full and clear response to my earlier question, and I fully accept everything that he said about VAT. However, if we lose some control of our indirect taxation yet have little room for manoeuvre on our exchange rate and interest rates, surely he and his successors as Chancellor of the Exchequer will become boxed in so that they have practically no room for manoeuvre. When we come to take a decision on single currency in 1996, we shall be told that it will make no difference as we will already have lost control of our economic affairs.

**Mr. Lamont:** As I explained, I do not think that it is realistic to think that VAT will fall to below 15 per cent. in the next three years. By stating that that would revert the decision for review——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House cannot hear the Chancellor if he does not speak into the microphone.

**Mr. Lamont:** I apologise, Madam Speaker.

I do not believe that that policy would seriously constrain our fiscal room for manoeuvre and I remain, as I always have been, firmly opposed to proposals for the harmonisation of other taxes. We must make judgments about what is necessary for the internal market—other countries will demand that. The discussion involved the very minimum. The House is in danger of forgetting that we have already accepted minimum rates across the range of excise duties. It forgets that a large number of indirect taxes—because of the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and successive directives—have already been placed within Community law.

**Mr. Cash:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Lamont:** Yes, but I hope that my hon. Friend will be briefer than he normally is.

**Mr. Cash:** In order to charge VAT, companies must be capable of being charged the amount of money due from them. Would it not be possible for my right hon. Friend to exert maximum influence on the Commission through the Department of Trade and Industry to ensure that we have a level playing field? Time and again in the past few days, company representatives have told me that they are having to operate on an uneven playing field. We must stop the subsidised goods coming from other countries that are damaging our industry.

**Mr. Lamont:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, but it is easier to make that point as a generalisation than to give specific examples. If my hon. Friend will give examples, I shall guarantee that they will be energetically investigated.

The other item that will be on the Finance Ministers' agenda in the next few months is future financing of the Community. The Commission originally proposed an increase in the own resources ceiling—the money that the Community is entitled to spend—from its current level of 1·2 per cent. to 1·37 per cent. of Community gross domestic produce. That may not sound like much, but it would mean an increase of about 30 per cent. in real terms —£14 billion—by 1997, compared to 1992. That would increase the United Kingdom's annual net contribution after abatement—British public spending—by about £1 billion a year in real terms.

When we consider what the Commission and the Community are saying to countries about convergence and how deficits throughout the Community must be reduced, it makes no sense for the Community to lecture countries on the need to control spending. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney would agree with that. I know that he does not agree about the convergence criteria, but I am sure that he would acknowledge that it is inconsistent for the Community to tell countries to cut deficits and spending, while trying to impose more spending on individual countries through the needless and unnecessary expansion of the Community budget.

The guideline that already exists in the financial perspective provides for a substantial increase in expenditure. Community expenditure could grow by more than 3 per cent. a year. The Commission's proposals would imply a real growth of 5·5 per cent. a year, which is simply unacceptable. A clear majority of my Finance Ministers and colleagues agree with me and there was widespread recognition at the Lisbon council that the own resources ceiling would be adequate for at least the next two years.

If it is right to restrain public spending at home, it must be right not to let it run away in Europe. The European Commission should take a realistic view about spending in the Community. It is no use it giving lectures to Finance Ministers on the matter. Nor are we prepared to accept that the provisions contained in the Maastricht treaty imply the sort of increase in Community expenditure that the Commission has proposed.

Those are the priorities for the European presidency. I am sorry that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has told us that he wants a revaluation of the deutschmark. Before the election, he told us again and again that he did not want sterling to be devalued. He did not seem to have any policies, and he was firm about only that one thing. He would not argue that the pound should be devalued. In the *Financial Times* on 27 September 1991, he said:

"We regard it"

DM2.95—

"as an obligation which has been entered into which we will maintain."

It is quite clear——

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

## PETITION

## Simon Mootoo

10 pm

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I present this petition, which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of Waltham Forest Anti-deportation Campaign.

sheweth

That Simon Mootoo a British serviceman came to settle in 1973. In 1975 four of his children joined him. His wife and two children remained in Mauritius. In 1980 his wife came to England. The two sons Ange Noe and Paul, were refused visas as they were then over eighteen. During the next four years Ange's parents made valiant efforts to convince the Home Office to allow them to join the rest of the family all to no avail. In 1987 the two sons were granted temporary admissions to visit their sick mother who was in intensive care. Ange did not return to Mauritius, he could not bear to leave his sick mother and ageing father. He remained here and cared for both his parents. Sadly in November 1988 Ange's mother died. Ange then became the sole provider for his father. In 1991 Ange sought to regularise his immigration status and applied for indefinite leave to remain. This was refused.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House urge the Home Secretary to grant Ange Noe Mootoo leave to remain indefinitely in the United Kingdom to care for his seventy six-year-old father.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray &c.

The first signature is that of Simon Mootoo of 37 Bakers Avenue, Walthamstow E17, who served this country at sea during the last war.

I strongly support this petition, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), and we urge the House to accept it.

*To lie upon the Table.*

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether there have been any requests from the Scottish Office to make a statement on a matter that is causing enormous anxiety to more than 100,000 people in the centre of Scotland: the contamination, with what is thought to be human excrement, of a major reservoir—the Blackridge reservoir. I understand that the initial reaction of the Scottish Office is that that serious matter is the responsibility of the local authority. I suggest to the House and to Ministers that, because of the health aspects, some responsibility lies with the Scottish Home and Health Department. I do not make too much of the fact that there is no Scottish Office Minister present, because Scottish Office Ministers may legitimately have returned to Edinburgh, but I must tell the Leader of the House that it is a matter that the Government——

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is a parliamentarian of long standing. It is not for him to put matters to the Leader of the House or to any other Minister. As he realises, points of order are for me. I understand his anxiety, but no Minister has sought permission to make a statement.

# Obscene Publications Act 1959

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.4 pm

**Ms. Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): The aim of tonight's debate is to draw the Minister's attention to problems in the way in which the Obscene Publications Act 1959 operates.

I am a passionate believer in freedom of speech, which is one of the great freedoms on which our society is built. Any limitations on the right to a free press and the right to publish need to be kept to a minimum. But I also believe that freedoms are balanced by responsibility.

When I was asked to add my name to the list of supporters of early-day motion 312 about "Juliette", my initial reaction was to say no; I do not believe in censorship. However, as soon as I had been read excerpts from that violent and horrific book, I was so disgusted and felt so physically sick that I agreed to add my name to the early-day motion. When I read further extracts, I was pleased that I had made that decision and decided to go further and ask for this Adjournment debate.

It is not just about this one book. "Juliette" is an example of some of the horrendously violent material that is available in booksellers. In June 1991, Arrow published in paperback the first British edition of "Juliette" by the Marquis de Sade, who gives his name to sadism. This is not a book of literary merit; it is too ill translated. Nor is it about sadism as most of us think of it. The main victims are children. Its characters revel in the gross abuse, multiple rape, sodomy and extreme torture and murder of more than 2,100 children and young teenagers and more than 450 women. And, throughout, the murders and tortures are glorified, admired and rewarded.

The Obscene Publications Act 1959 attempted to provide a new balance between freedom to publish and responsibility to others. The responsibility element was expressed in the now notorious phrase that material could be found obscene if it had a

"tendency to deprave and corrupt."

This test has proved a nightmare for juries. There have been perverse decisions about similar material in different parts of the country. The Director of Public Prosecutions has decided not to act against some horrific publications. In some instances the police have been uncertain about what will be found obscene. In the case of "Juliette" and books of this ilk, I do not see how there can be any doubt.

I had thought of quoting from the book this evening. I consider myself to have a reasonably strong stomach, but I am afraid that "Juliette" is too horrible for me to do so. Furthermore, I would not wish to give the impression that there are one or two isolated incidents that are particularly bad. It is the whole book that is the problem. Throughout all his books Sade positively advocates attacks on the vulnerable and finds excuses for child abuse, and thereby justifies it.

I am aware, however, that hon. Members listening to this debate or reading it in *Hansard,* and indeed the Minister here tonight, may believe that I am over-reacting. I therefore arranged to send the Minister, prior to this debate, a copy of a briefing paper on "Juliette" by the author and journalist Moyra Bremner, which includes extensive quotations and an analysis of the book. Indeed, there is a copy available for every hon. Member in the House. I urge them all to collect and read a copy.

The public have been led to believe that our obscenity and pornography laws are strong. In fact, they are a mess. For example, the law on obscene photographs of children is effective, but, as the case of "Juliette" shows, the law on books is useless. It seems incredible that a publisher would decide to release such a book and that booksellers would sell it. However, some chains, such as W. H. Smith and John Menzies, have refused to stock it, which is very welcome. Sadly, however, there are people willing to buy such books, and publishers can make money from them.

Earlier today, I met Superintendent Michael Hames, who is in charge of the obscene publications squad at Scotland Yard to discuss his work with him. He was quite forthright about the problems that the police have with the Obscene Publications Act. Because of a series of court cases, they can no longer prosecute all the material that they consider to be obscene. It seems as if the rug has been pulled from beneath their feet because written material such as "Juliette" has escaped the current law even though the images that it creates are so powerful. Psychologists working with sex offenders believe that such material can directly influence the actions of those carrying out child abuse and other sex offences.

**Dame Peggy Fenner** (Medway): I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that extracts from "Juliette" were sent to me to read, and I share the hon. Lady's revulsion and horror that such books can appear on any bookstall. But the book was first drawn to my attention by a prison chaplain who wrote to me pleading that it should not be provided in the prison library. Whereupon I wrote to the Home Office asking whether that was the sort of material that criminals and sex offenders should have in prison for recreational reading. I received a wet reply from the Home Office Minister, telling me that, as the book was available in bookshops, it was available in prison libraries. Will the Minister please read the book for himself, even if he feels that it is likely to deprave, as I am sure he will? It is disgraceful, not only that it should be in bookshops but that we should give it to prisoners as recreational reading.

**Ms. Lynne:** I agree with the hon. Lady. It is appalling that the book is available in prisons. It is available in prisons because it is available in the bookshops. If we took it off the bookshelves, it would not be available in the prisons.

Can anyone believe that it is a coincidence that the Moors murderers made notes from de Sade justifying rape and murder? That case still haunts the area that I represent.

Some of us probably associate the obscenity law with prudency and material that simply gives offence. I emphasise that that is not the issue on which I sought this debate. There is ample evidence that grossly violent pornography can do real life harm to individuals and society.

The last time there was a review was in 1978, when the Williams committee looked at the matter. Its report now seems strangely out of date, so much has happened in the area in the past 14 years. All the evidence suggests that pornographic material has become much harder and more violent in its content since that time. Perhaps the only lasting impact of the Williams report was its suggestion that the written word should not be prosecuted because of

*[Ms. Lynne]*

its importance to literature. I wonder whether members of the Williams committee would take the same view now if they were to read "Juliette". I doubt it very much.

I am certain that the Williams committee never envisaged material as ruthlessly violent as "Juliette" and other books like it being put into high street booksellers. The fact that they are available means, as the hon. Lady said, that they are available in prisons, which is appalling and unacceptable. They are freely available to sex offenders who have been imprisoned for the very crimes that they can then read about in those books. We must make sure that something happens about that.

Freedom of speech and freedom to reach are important, but those freedoms can never be absolute. Publishers cannot claim that books are so educational that they must be exempt from VAT and yet also claim that books such as "Juliette" have no impact. I must make it clear that I am not looking for some draconian new law that will censor every item of material before it is published. I am just asking for protection for the most vulnerable in society.

It will not have escaped the Minister's attention that this Adjournment debate has attracted the support of many hon. Members, in all parts of the House. As a new Member of Parliament, I do not know the names of them all and the constituencies that they represent, so I hope that they will excuse me if I cannot identify them. I am, however, particularly grateful to the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) for agreeing to participate in this debate. Cross-party support is so important if our efforts are to have any real effect.

I urge the Minister to respond to that widespread support by instituting a review for the sake of this country's children, and to protect them from further harm.

10.15 pm

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on securing this, her first Adjournment debate, and I thank her for devoting it to such an important subject and for so actively supporting my campaign against the book "Juliette". The hon. Lady spoke with great feeling, but her arguments were not emotional but were based on reason. I am particularly indebted to her for sharing with me the time allocated for this debate.

The "Juliette" case demonstrates the total inadequacy of the current law on obscenity. "Juliette" is not a book; it is a vile manual, and a thick one at that, that encourages the sexual abuse, murder, and torture of children and other vulnerable people. It is not literature; it is the glorification of extreme violence.

Right hon.and hon. Members in all parts of the House have shown that they support a review of the working of the law on obscenity. Early-day motion 312, in my name —and supported by the hon. Members for Rochdale, for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), and for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who are all present in the Chamber—calls for such a review. It has to date attracted the signatures of 79 right hon. and hon. Members from seven political parties. I understand that a number of right hon. and hon. Members have also written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department expressing their support for my call for a review of the law.

I was pleased to learn from a written answer from my hon. Friend the Minister that the Government agree that the law on obscenity has deficiencies, and that they are willing to support attempts at reform. However, although my hon. Friend's answer begins so promisingly, it rapidly runs into the sand, by mistakenly making this suggestion:

"Recent attempts to reform the law . . . have failed to attract sufficient parliamentary support".

He also argues that

"this is an area for private Member initiative."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1992; Vol. 210, c. *523*.]

The Government are wrong about why previous attempts at reform failed, and about the extent of Government involvement in such reform.

The most recent attempt at reforming the Obscene Publications Act 1959 was in the Session immediately prior to the 1987 general election, in the form of a Bill sponsored by Mr. Gerald Howarth. His Bill fell not because of lack of support but because of lack of sufficient time due to the general election being called that year.

Since then, there have been two Government initiatives. The Criminal Justice Act 1988 made possession of child pornography an offence, and the Broadcasting Act 1990 extended the provisions of the 1959 Act to broadcasting. It is inaccurate to claim that obscenity law reform is solely a matter for private Members.

I ought also to remind the House of the precedent for Government action in other areas of the law where there is one moral component. There is a long history of Governments' reviewing problems with such laws, facilitating necessary parliamentary debate, bringing forward legislation, and even allowing a free vote on certain provisions. Recent examples involve abortion, embryology, capital punishment, war crimes and Sunday trading.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. As this is a serious subject, I am sorry to call the hon. Lady to order, but I want to draw her attention and that of the House to the fact that, in general, matters that would entail legislation must not be discussed on the motion for the Adjournment. I can, of course, allow incidental references to legislation, but we must abide by the rules of "Erskine May".

**Mrs. Winterton:** I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for drawing my attention to the rules of the House. I was, indeed, aware of them, and I was trying to quote previous examples of Government involvement in this area. I am grateful to you for your advice.

I genuinely believe that the Gvoernment need to arrange a review of available options and to introduce new legislation at an early date. I do not believe that hon. Members who have seen the repugnant material included in "*Juliette*", to which the hon. Member for Rochdale has referred, will accept that the Government could possibly sustain their position that this matter should be left to private Members. Even Scotland Yard has backed my calls for a Government review.

Action is needed now to sort out the law by a careful consideration of all the options for reform. I hope that the Minister, in his response, will announce a review.

10.21 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on obtaining this debate. It gives me personal pleasure to say that her predecessor, Sir Cyril Smith, used to be a regular visitor to my constituency. With his mother, he took the air in Lytham St. Anne's. I am pleased that the hon. Lady has had this opportunity to raise what is a very important matter. Bearing in mind the tone of the debate and the number of Members who are present, I am in no doubt about the seriousness with which this issue is regarded, not just in this House but, clearly, in the country.

The hon. Member for Rochdale and my hon. Friend the Members for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) and for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) urged me, for education's sake, to look at the book "Juliette". I assure the House that as soon as I knew that this debate had been tabled I did just that. I share many of the views that hon. Members have expressed about "Juliette". I found the book extremely difficult to read, and I understand very well the concern and shock that they have expressed about its content.

The hon. Member for Rochdale mentioned the Director of Public Prosecutions. The decision of last December not to prosecute Arrow Books for publishing "Juliette" was made after advice had been received from leading counsel. The reason for that advice was that there was insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. While I understand hon. Members' concern about that decision, I think that they will agree——

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Jack:** I have been generous in terms of time, so I hope that my hon. Friend will allow me to make progress. Hon. Members have raised a number of points to which they want replies, but, if it is possible, I shall allow an intervention from my hon. Friend.

I hope that hon. Members will agree that it was right to apply the normal prosecution criteria. As will be appreciated, I cannot comment further on this matter. The advice that the director receives and the considerations that he takes into account in coming to his decisions are, by long tradition and for good reasons, confidential. In discharging this role, the director properly enjoys independence from outside interference—independence that this House, when enacting the relevant legislation, has been most anxious to preserve.

I recognise the force with which comments have been expressed tonight, and I certainly undertake to report the views of the hon. Lady to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. I should also point out that the acting DPP's decision does not prevent anyone from bringing a private prosecution if he wishes to do so. That is right, and an important safeguard in cases in which it is felt that the courts should have the opportunity to reach a view.

Let me now deal with the subject of obscenity legislation in general.

**Mr. Mark Wolfson** (Sevenoaks): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Jack:** Yes, at the risk of not being able to answer other hon. Members' questions.

**Mr. Wolfson:** My hon. Friend is now dealing with an extremely important issue. So far the debate has focused on the appalling obscenities of "Juliette", but the whole subject of pornography requires a legislative rethink. Many similar publications are just as dangerous and damaging as "Juliette", and that is why we want action from the Government.

**Mr. Jack:** I understand my hon. Friend's concern. In the remaining time, I hope to explain that we have a comprehensive range of legislation which deal with many aspects of obscenity and pornography; if I am not able to do so, I shall write to hon. Members.

The Obscene Publications Act 1959, on which attention is usually focused, is only one part of that comprehensive range of legislation. The Post Office Act 1953 forbids the sending of indecent or obscene articles through the post. The Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955 prohibits the publication of comics depicting incidents of a repulsive or horrible——

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** May I take up that point, which is vital to the argument? No one questions the fact that certain aspects of obscenity law are not strong. Obscenity law is like a patchwork quilt, strong in parts and extremely weak in others. The DPP was not prepared to prosecute the publisher of the book that we have been discussing because parts of the obscenity law are missing: that is the issue that we are addressing, and asking my hon. Friend the Minister to address.

**Mr. Jack:** It is only right for those who comment on our obscenity laws, and on pornography, to do so with a knowledge of all the controls that exist. Obscenity and pornography occur in many different guises, and I thought it right to make the House aware of the range of legislation. There are many other Acts, but time now forbids me from listing them all. Looking at the position in the round, I think that we can be said to have the toughest pornography controls in Europe, and I hope that the House will take some small comfort from that.

The operation of the Obscene Publications Act lies, I believe, at the heart of the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Rochdale. The main control over obscene publications is the 1959 Act, which was supplemented by further legislation in 1964. Its significance derives from its all-embracing nature, regardless of whether the requirements of other legislation are met. If a work is deemed to be obscene within the terms of the 1959 Act, and if the statutory defences are unsuccessful, its publication is an offence. The Act provides that any person who publishes an obscene article, or possesses it for publication for gain, commits an offence.

As well as providing for prosecution, the Act provides for the seizure and forfeiture of obscene articles by order of an magistrates court without a criminal prosecution. In cases of that sort, the court must be satisfied that the articles are obscene and kept for publication for gain, and that the person from whom they were seized has not shown cause why the articles should not be forfeited.

Hon. Members may be interested to learn that, in 1990, 174 people were prosecuted for offences under the Act, of whom 73 were convicted; and that, in 1991, 20,000 articles were the subject of successful seizure proceedings in the Metropolitan police district alone.

Criticism has been voiced this evening of the Obscene Publications Act. I hope that the figures demonstrate that

*[Mr. Jack]*

the present legislation does have some effect. Equally, we recognise that it gives grounds for concern. There has sometimes been criticism of the "public good" defence, which is available in both prosecution and forfeiture proceedings and which applies if a defendant is able to prove that the publication of the article in question is justified as being for the public good, on the grounds that it is in the interests of science, literature, art or learning, or other objects of general concern. Many hon. Members will recollect that it was the latter provisions that gave rise, in some celebrated cases in the past, to processions of expert witnesses called to attest to the literary or other merits of certain works.

**Mr. Andrew Robathan** (Blaby): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Jack:** I wonder whether my hon. Friend would allow me a few more moments in which to make a little progress?

However, the element in the 1959 Act that attracts most attention is the test of obscenity itself. The Act adopted, with slight variations, the already existing common law definition of obscenity. Section 1 provides:

"an article shall be deemed to be obscene if its effect, . . . is . . . if taken as a whole, such as to tend to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it."

This is a rigorous test. It is not sufficient to establish that those who are exposed to a work find it distressing or offensive. Rather, the prosecution is required to establish that the work has not just the potential but the tendency to corrupt or deprave. I know that hon. Members are interested in that aspect, so I felt it right to put on record the way that the law works.

Hon. Members have asked for reform of the law. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton referred to Gerald Howarth's Bill in the last Parliament. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when speaking as a Home Office Minister, expressed his support for such a test in the debate on Gerald Howarth's Bill. It was argued that a work's offensiveness to a reasonable person is an easier test to apply. On that occasion, and on others, the Government demonstrated their support for amendments to the legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton very properly asked me why the Government were not initiating legislation. I refer her to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd) in which he said:

"Legislation on obscenity is by tradition left to private Members and the Government are reluctant—rightly, I believe—to set that tradition aside."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 1372.]

If my hon. Friend looks at a number of measures, she will find that not all of them have commanded the widespread support in the House that she suggested in her remarks.

**Mr. Robathan:** I was going to ask my hon. Friend when I first tried to intervene whether he intended to refer in more detail to "Juliette," which is the subject of the Adjournment debate. He may know that I spent about 15 years in the Army. I may have seen more pornography in barrack rooms than most hon. Members, and I can promise my hon. Friend that I have never seen anything in my life so depraved, disgusting and repulsive as this book.

**Mr. Jack:** Having taken the trouble to get hold of a copy, I can well understand my hon. Friend's remarks. I found the book extremely difficult to read. I can well understand why its contents would shock an individual who read it. However, my task this evening is to put in context the way in which our obscenity laws work and to show that, although this area of our law has come under attack and question this evening, a number of well-rounded measures exist to deal with pornography as it occurs.

**Dr. Robert Spink** (Castle Point): Can the Minister give an undertaking that the Government would support a private Member's Bill along those lines?

**Mr. Jack:** I would not want to say that the Government would support something that my hon. Friend describes as "a private Member's Bill along those lines." I am sure that he will understand——

*The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour,* MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

*Adjourned at twenty-six minutes to Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 3 July 1992*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PETITION

### Fishing Limits

9.34 am

**Mr. Austin Mitchell** (Great Grimsby): I have a petition from Mr. Eric Clemonts of 60, Harrington street, Cleethorpes. The petition started in Grimsby and Cleethorpes, and spread to other parts of the country. It has been signed by 18,000 petitioners, many of them did so in fishmongers and—judging by the petition's smell—in fish and chip shops up and down the country.

The petition states that Britain contributes almost two thirds of the waters in the so-called European pool and almost three quarters of the valuable species of fish. That pool has been over-fished by European fleets that have fished out their own waters. As a result, a conservation crisis has developed, threatening the lives and well-being of the fishermen of this country. The petition urges the Government to take back control of British territorial waters, on the ground that only the nation state has an interest in conserving its own fish stocks.

The petition states:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House direct her Majesty's Government to assume control over those waters extending 200 miles out to sea and to the midway point in the North Sea, English Channel and Irish Sea of which they are the lawful custodians in order to halt the wilful and reckless destruction of Britain's fish stocks and the livelihood of our fishermen by the criminally greedy and irresponsible fleets of other Common Market states. These potentially rich resources are the property of the British people as much as North Sea oil and gas, and we see no justification for their surrender. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever humbly pray".

*To lie upon the Table.*

## Point of Order

9.36 am

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard questions yesterday about the French blockade of British hauliers in France. Have you received any information about a statement by the Foreign Minister on the subject? Is it not about time that the Foreign Minister called in the French ambassador to try to stop the carnage and the threats to the British lorry drivers to the effect that if they do not behave, their windows will be smashed? It is high time that Parliament stopped crawling on its hands and knees to Jacques Delors and the rest of them, and did something about the British drivers and holiday makers.

**Madam Speaker:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's direct point of order is no. I have not received any requests from the Government about making an announcement or statement this morning.

# Special Educational Needs

9.37 am

**Mrs. Anne Campbell** (Cambridge): I beg to move,

That this House considers that the opportunities for children and adults with special educational needs are being jeopardised by the fragmentation of education and the inadequate level of resources from central government.

I have chosen special educational needs as the subject of my motion as it is apparent that serious problems are developing in that aspect of our education system. More and more teachers are coming to the end of their tethers as cracks appear in the system of support for children with special educational needs. It is not just children with special needs and teachers who are suffering, but all children. If schools do not have sufficient resources to cope with special needs, they cannot give a fair deal to any of their pupils.

Before the election I was approached by a mother with a son in a school in Cambridge. She said that she had progressed through the state system and done reasonably well, gaining three A-levels, but she was concerned that her child would not benefit in the same way. The class in which he was being taught had a high proportion of children with special needs, although they have not been formally identified as such. The teacher had to spend much time with those children and had little time for the rest. As a result, the children without special needs were missing out and gaining little educational benefit from their school. I have discovered that that is by no means an isolated case and that the problem is becoming increasingly common.

Some 11 years after the passing of the Education Act 1981, and nine years after it came into force, it is time for the Government to take a hard look at special needs education and ask why things are beginning to go seriously wrong. Special needs education is in serious crisis in my constituency and is affecting all children. Every crisis poses both threats and opportunities. The threats are to the education of our children and the longer-term health of our society; the opportunities are to learn from what is going on and to make changes for the better.

When the Education Act 1981 was introduced there was a consensus. There was support for its provisions. I believe that that consensus still exists. The measures in the Education Act 1981 were the natural extension of a comprehensive education system, enacting the principles of equal access and equal opportunities. Children who had learning difficulties or physical handicaps would be entitled to have an assessment of their needs. Identified special educational needs would be met in mainstream schools through individual attention, learning support assistance and specialist teaching. Wherever possible, children who previously would have been sent to special schools would be integrated into mainstream schools. All children would have an enriched educational experience, as human prejudices were confronted and annihilated. A small minority of children whose needs were greater than most would have the additional safeguard of a formal statement which specified their needs and put a legal obligation on the local education authority to meet them.

One measure of the success of the 1981 Act is that there has been a steady decline in the proportion of children in special schools. Parents, teachers and learning support assistants have worked hard together to make the implementation of the Education Act 1981 a reality. I know that all the schools in my constituency remain very strongly committed to the principles of the 1981 Act. We have to ask ourselves, therefore, why things are beginning to fall apart.

The inadequate level of resources is the primary reason for the problems that we are experiencing in special needs education. I am not alone in holding the view that not enough resources are allocated to special needs education. That view has recently been expressed by the new Director General of the Confederation of British Industry, Howard Davies, who, in his previous post, was head of the Audit Commission. I think that it is fair to say that Director Generals of the Confederation of British Industry are not normally renowned for their socialist views. I want to stress, therefore, that it is not simply we on this side of the House who argue that local authorities are being starved of cash.

I have here case studies drawn from the Spastics Society's research on statementing, based on the experiences of 240 families with children with disabilities. In the first case, Adrian's mother wrote:

"He has achieved a lot in his school work but he could have achieved so much more if he had more back-up, more regularly. Equipment to help him with motor skills problems is not very forthcoming. Help in sports is also lacking . . .his physio sees him once a week but he needs more. I work with him but I'm no expert. At assessment reviews, ideas are very forthcoming but often are never followed through . . . I think there is a lot more room for improvement in the system to help disabled children in mainstream schools."

In the second case, Jonathan's mother commented on the "meanness" of the local education authority in refusing relatively low-cost aids for Jonathan—for example, appropriate computer software, in view of the

"thousands of pounds I have saved them"

in undertaking transport arrangements for him and going to help in school when paid help was not available. Jonathan's story illustrates the "hidden subsidy" contributed by parents to successful integration.

Most parents' accounts from the Spastics Society study indicate the damage caused to integration by the lack of resources. Likewise, for Sarah, the resources to carry out the statement

"could not be guaranteed by the authorities."

A welfare assistant had been offered

"on a take-it-or-leave-it basis."

These examples are typical of what is happening throughout the country.

Central Government do not allow local authorities to spend enough on education. The Government's cap on local government spending is, in effect, a cap on opportunities for children with special needs and, therefore, a cap on the opportunities for all children. Those who want evidence of the resource problem need look no further than the increasing numbers of children with special needs who are being excluded from schools. A recent survey pointed to the fact that exclusions were up 20 per cent. on the previous year. The evidence is that they will increase.

The authors of a recent Audit Commission report stated that they could find no evidence at present that schools were becoming less willing to accept children with special needs. In preparing for this debate I came across a number of specific cases in my constituency in which children were being excluded from mainstream schools. I had to look no further than the *Cambridge Evening News* and my mailbag. My researcher came across more examples when he spoke to the head teachers of the local schools.

I am not criticising the schools. I know from personal contact that all of them are committed to the integration of children with special needs, but they are torn between their desire to implement the aims of the 1981 Act and their commitment to give all pupils a decent education. They are no longer prepared to accept children unless they are given adequate resources to cater for their needs. In excluding pupils, they are often supported by the parents of the children involved, not because they do not want their children to go to mainstream schools but because the parents know that if their children are not given an appropriate level of learning support assistance their move to a mainstream school will be counterproductive.

Exclusions from mainstream schools have knock-on effects. They mean that children have to stay in special schools and special units attached to mainstream schools. That in turn means that children who would benefit from places in special units have to wait. We have many examples of that in Cambridge.

The effect of the inadequate level of resources is exacerbated by the increasing proportion of children in our schools who have formal statements of special educational need. The reasons for this appear to be complex. I have heard it argued that there is an increasing real demand because more low birth weight and premature babies are surviving into childhood. These children are more likely to have physical or mental handicaps, with associated learning difficulties. With the steady advance of modern medicine, I am sure that this is a factor. However, I believe that it is unlikely to be the principal cause.

There are probably two main reasons that explain the increasing rate of statementing. The first is increasing parental demand for formal statements; the second is the increasing number of children in our society who have emotional and behavioural problems. The argument turns full circle. The scarcity of resources explains why parents and schools are putting more pressure on local education authorities to have their children statemented. Because a local education authority is legally obliged to comply with the terms of a formal statement, the statement comes with resources attached to it.

Statementing has become a means of ensuring that the education of one's child is buffered against any cuts in special needs provision. That is exactly what is happening in my constituency this year. Primary and secondary schools in Cambridge are facing cuts of anything up to 75 per cent. in hours of learning support assistance. The children who are least affected are those who have statements which specify the number of hours of learning support.

One can hardly blame parents for pressing for the statementing of their children, yet it was not the intention of the 1981 Act to create a situation in which parents and schools compete with each other to get their children statemented in order to secure the resources that they need. In my opinion, it is against the spirit of the Act.

That view was well expressed by Lady Warnock in a recent debate in another place when she said:

"Children with statements are becoming a class apart, just as the handicapped used to be considered as a class apart. The notion that was central to the 1981 Act of a continuum of special needs . . . has been lost sight of as the number of statemented children rises and non-statemented children are left out of the need for special provision."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 June 1992; Vol. 537, c. 1397.]

Hence, the 2 per cent. of children with statements are getting some provision and it is becoming increasingly true that those without formal statements are getting practically nothing in the way of extra resources. It cannot be right that one child with a statement gets 30 hours of learning support assistance a week while another, whose problems are slightly less severe, gets nothing at all.

Many parents have told me that the statement for their child did not tell them anything that they did not know already. There is also evidence in a recent Audit Commission report which confirms that the process of formal assessment is not regarded as useful by the majority of parents in defining the needs of their children.

Only one in seven of parents questioned found the statementing process informative, but three times as many valued the process because it gave their child the necessary resources to progress.

The process of formal assessment is costly. The Government's recent announcements about strengthening the statementing process and introducing an appeals procedure must add to the cost. If resources are limited —we all accept that they are—would not it be better to redirect them into providing help for the child rather than into strengthening the statementing process?

The second substantial cause of the increasing demand for statementing is the rapid increase in the number of children in our schools who are emotionally and behaviourally disturbed. This is one of the areas of greatest concern to schools in my constituency, and I have no doubt that that concern is shared in schools across the country.

Increasing social need is a terrible indictment of the Government's social policy. It is a symptom of the greater inequality and poverty that their policies have produced; the scandal of homelessness is another. I am deeply worried about the lack of provision for children who are emotionally and behaviourally disturbed. Supporting those children is the unattractive side of special needs education. There may be some kudos attached to helping people who have learning difficulties, but coping with children who are disruptive is a less-favoured proposition. It is expensive, and if resources are not available the teaching life of the school is jeopardised.

That is backed up by the Audit Commission, which considered special school costs for different categories of special need. For children with moderate learning difficulties, the annual cost is £4,000 per child. For children with severe learning difficulties, the figure is £6,500 and for children with emotional and behavioural disturbance it is more than £8,000. I stress that emotional and behavioural disturbance does not describe simply naughtly children who need to be brought into line. It often describes children who have been subjected to appalling physical, emotional and sometimes sexual abuse.

Problems associated with the process of statementing are identified in the Audit Commission's report. As there are no clearly defined criteria on the level of need at which statementing becomes appropriate, local education authorities have different policies on the process of formal assessment. The proportion of statemented children in different local education authorities varies by a factor of five, and in the 12 local education authorities studied for the Audit Commission's report there was no relationship between the apparent level of need and the proportion of children with statements.

The writers of the Audit Commission report observed a lack of consistency in local education authorities. An examination of 300 cases showed that pupils with widely

*[Mrs. Anne Campbell]*

differing levels of need were issued with statements. Schools in all 12 local education authorities were able to point out children without a statement who had greater needs than those with a statement. Factors that had no bearing on the need of a child were influential in the decision to issue a statement, the most significant being the level of determination of the school or parent and whether the parent was represented by a lawyer or a voluntary organisation.

The implication of all the findings is that resources are not being well targeted on children with the greatest need. The Minister should ask himself whether recent moves to strengthen the statementing process will change the situation. I believe that they will not, because the parents who press for statements will be articulate, middle class and will know how to do it under the present system. The new law may make it slightly easier for them, but it will do nothing to reduce inequalities between parents who have the knowledge and confidence to do battle with the LEA and those who do not.

There is a conflict in the statementing process because the local education authority is assessor and provider. An LEA has no incentive to issue specific statements requiring it to provide teaching support for which it has no resources. This leads to disputes between schools and local education authorities where it is felt that the refusal to issue a statement or to make its terms more specific resulted from an unwillingness or inability to provide resources, rather than a proper assessment of need. One parent who was interviewed by the Spastics Society explained:

"A statement is supposed to be a legally binding document which has an effect on the rest of your child's life—they cannot be honest and say what they really feel because they are limited to the provision that they know the LEA can provide and so you are lost really before you start. So why bother having a procedure like this when it might as well not be done?"

My local education authority in Cambridgeshire has admitted that education officers encourage schools not to go through the formal statementing procedure but assure them that resources will still be available to meet the child's need. In the event, this has not proved possible and schools and parents are outraged to find that children without a formal statement of special needs are having their learning support assistance cut dramatically.

The fragmentation of our education system since the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988 has made special needs education even worse than it might have been. Formula funding under local management of schools is calculated largely on a per capita basis and has penalised schools in areas of greatest social need. That is certainly so in Cambridge, where I know of at least two schools that lost teaching staff previously appointed at the discretion of the local education authority. I should like to read extracts from a letter that was written to me by the chair of governors of the schools. She says:

"I write on behalf of the joint Governing Body of the two schools to express our very grave concern at the lack of support being given to schools by the Local Education Authority. Communication at all levels is poor; headteachers in crisis situations—eg concerning children who have been abused or are abusing others, children with severe behavioural problems, teachers threatened with violence from parents—are receiving little or no help or advice . . . we know that money is short. We question the management of that money especially in the area of special educational needs. The schools have 'lost out' under Local Management of Schools in that the two extra teachers allocated to them in recognition of the heavy special needs demands were removed under formula funding. The latest blow is that the allocation of support staff to the schools for next year has been reduced to a level which is totally inadequate. The schools have been likened by an independent professional to a 'simmering pot'. The staff do a fantastic job—we are proud of our delivery of the National Curriculum—and because of their dedication the 'lid is kept on the pot'. Now those staff numbers are to be reduced, despite evidence of increased needs in the children, and staff are becoming exhausted, we fear that the 'pot may boil over'."

The room for manoeuvre by local education authorities is further restricted by the creation of grant-maintained schools, which pose an even more invidious threat to special needs education. There is the real possibility that those schools will exclude children with special educational needs. I am less worried for children with learning difficulties of physical disabilities than for those with behavioural problems. There is some credit to be gained by a school catering for children with learning difficulties and there is little threat to the overall academic standards of the school, but disruptive children are another matter. The point is graphically made in the Audit Commission's report:

"No LEA reported difficulty in setting up units for pupils with special needs in ordinary schools, providing they were able to agree on the funding arrangements with the school. A number of schools were contemplating seeking grant-maintained status and all stated that they wished to retain their units for pupils with special needs. The one exception to all of this is the case of children with emotional and behavioural disturbance."

I want to underline that. It is a concern of the Audit Commission as well.

Exclusion of pupils on the grounds of special educational need is the first rung on the ladder of introducing selection according to academic ability. It is selection at its most basic and prejudicial level.

I shall deal briefly with post-19 provision, the provision for adults with special educational needs. I know that many hon. Members also wish to mention it. The opportunities for many people with learning difficulties are abruptly cut off at the age of 19. Although such people may have been given extra help throughout their childhood, it is as if, at the age of 19, the existence of their disabilities is no longer acknowledged. Provision for continuing education for people with special educational needs has always been lamentably inadequate, but there is now real uncertainty about the future of what provision there is.

With the implementation of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, parents fear for their children, and centres of further education are unable to plan ahead. They have no idea of the basis on which special needs education for adults will be funded from April 1993 when responsibility for further education establishments is transferred from county councils to the newly formed Further Education Funding Council. Are the Government committed to maintaining and improving the provision for post-19 special educational needs?

**Mr. Tom Clarke** (Monklands, West): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Has she been made aware of the statement by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation which expresses its concern about the confusion following the implementation of sections 5 and 6 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and

Representation) Act 1986? The statement deals with precisely her point. It refers to young people reaching the dramatic age at which they leave school—they and their parents find that the world has changed and that no arrangements have been made. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should take this opportunity to confirm that they are closely monitoring the legislation?

**Mrs. Campbell:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point which I hope the Minister will consider in his response.

Are the Government committed to maintaining and improving the provision for post-19 special educational needs? If so, how are the resources to be allocated? What support will they give to adults with multiple handicaps? The Government have a responsibility to answer those questions.

I said that a crisis poses a threat and an opportunity. The opportunity is offered because a crisis can prompt a serious and valuable reappraisal. I have attempted to offer an analysis of the threat to special needs education, which I believe points the way ahead. We expect the Government to publish a White Paper on education in the not-too-distant future, and I sincerely hope that they will take note of what is said today.

Recent Government proposals on special needs education have concentrated on strengthening the statementing process. There is considerable evidence that some local education authorities have been dilatory in that respect. However, there are also dangers in an approach which concentrates exclusively on one aspect of a complex system.

There is a danger that the resourcing of special needs education will become strongly biased towards children with articulate parents, while it ignores the rest, and against children with special needs who do not have statements. There is also a danger that too many resources will be diverted into the process of formal assessment to the detriment of the provision of real support for children with special needs. The danger of strengthening the statementing process alone is that the Government are merely giving parents yet another stick with which to beat local education authorities.

Without additional resources the statement will become a meaningless piece of paper. In fact, the Government's apparent unwillingness to provide more resources for special needs education, or at least to allow local education authorities to raise more money for special needs, leads me to suspect that the Government have a "wash-your-hands-of-responsibility" policy towards special needs education. Something far more fundamental needs to be done than what the Government have so far proposed.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): I wonder whether the hon. Lady does not have more confidence in the teaching profession than seems the case from her interesting speech. Does she agree that children with special educational needs should be, and invariably are, thrown up—if I may use that term—by the teaching professionals who recognise the problems? Is not the real problem the fact that local authorities—or the nation—do not have a sufficiently developed psychological service to enunciate the needs of the children? I believe that that is where the blockage lies, and we must all accept that such a blockage exists.

**Mrs. Campbell:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point, because it allows me to re-emphasise what I was saying. Teachers are doing a wonderful job. They recognise children's needs, but the difficulty is for the local education authority to provide the extra resources required. I do not believe that the problem lies with the psychological service. The Audit Commission's survey said that one in seven parents did not learn anything new from the statementing process itself. They knew what their child needed, but the support is simply not available under the present financial regime.

There is an urgent need for the Government to produce guidelines on the level of need for which a formal assessment is appropriate. That is necessary so that parents and local education authorities know where they stand and so that the original intention behind the formal assessment can be recaptured. It was never intended that statementing should be seen as the only means of securing help for children with special needs. The Government have a lop-sided policy in strengthening the statementing process without defining criteria for deciding whether to initiate a formal assessment.

The Government must also examine seriously formula funding under local management of schools. There is a need for the system to be reformed so that social need is taken properly into account in the funding allocated to individual schools. Children with behavioural and social problems should not necessarily have to go through the formal statementing procedure to get the resources that they and the schools need to cope.

There is no doubt of the threat posed to the principles of equality of opportunity and equality of access by grant-maintained schools in relation to children with special educational needs. For that reason, among others, grant-maintained schools should never have been introduced and should now be abolished.

As all schools are to be assessed on examination results, pupil attendances and other factors, there will be a monstrous disincentive to admit children with special needs, especially those with behavioural and emotional problems. What is to become of such children who have already been badly hit by poverty and a lack of security in their family backgrounds? Will they miss out on school altogether as schools decide that they cannot risk their position in the league tables? Do we merely store up trouble for ourselves by creating another generation of inadequate parents?

The Government must consider ways of separating the functions of the assessment of special educational need and the provision for special educational need, both of which are at present carried out by the local education authority. It may be necessary to establish an independent office in each education authority to carry out the function of assessment which will be completely independent of that authority.

Underlying all the problems that I have related, the root cause of the present situation is insufficient resources. In the last analysis, the key measure of the Government's commitment to special needs education is the amount of funding that they allocate to that cause. Without adequate resources, even the best mechanisms of support in the world will falter. The Government must give serious thought to increasing the resources allocated to special needs education.

I am conscious of the heavy burden of responsibility——

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): The hon. Lady makes an interesting point about a new form of independent assessment within a local education authority area but not of the local education authority. At the moment, the teacher, parents, education authority and—where appropriate—the health authority are involved in multi-disciplinary assessments. What does the hon. Lady think is missing, as they seem to be the key people in assessing an individual child's individual special needs?

**Mrs. Campbell:** I am grateful to the Gentleman for making that point because it allows me to amplify my comments. It is important that all those people are involved in the assessment of the child's needs because they know the child and are able best to assess what the child needs to correct his or her difficulties. However, I do not believe that the responsibility for specifying the resources should lie with the local education authority, which is ultimately the body for supplying the resources. That was my point.

I am conscious of the heavy burden of responsibility I carry today to express the hopes and fears of all parents, learning support assistants, teachers and head teachers in my constituency who have urged me to take up in the House the issue of special needs education. Would that I could take home with me some words of encouragement from the Minister. There are schools in my constituency that are held together only by the willpower of head teachers and their staff who are working far beyond the call of duty. They are literally stretched to breaking point in trying to cope with their children who have special educational needs. The cuts that they will experience in learning support assistance next year may be the last straw. Some of the material with which they provided me in preparation for today's debate—the case histories and accounts of their working lives—would move people with the hardest of hearts. I want the Minister to be moved and to throw away his ideology. I plead with him not to fragment our education system yet further, but to consider carefully the suffering and deprivation that fragmentation will cause.

There are hon. Members of all parties who care about children and adults with special educational needs. We are determined that those people will not be left out in the cold. We are equally determined to support the teachers and learning support assistants who are being put under so much stress. If we are able to do nothing other than to be a voice for those people, we shall speak loudly and in unison, and we shall continue to argue on their behalf until our arguments prevail.

10.11 am

**Sir John Hannam** (Exeter): The House is grateful to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) for providing this opportunity to debate special educational needs. She raised many important points which will be taken up by hon. Members and replied to by the Minister. The all-party disablement group has been at the forefront of action to ensure that the legal framework for special education laid down in the Education Act 1981 is not only properly carried out by local authorities, but strengthened and improved. Over the past year, we have had a number of meetings with Ministers and I am pleased that in his letter to me on 25 June my hon. Friend the Minister confirmed:

"the Government shares the general concerns about the operation of the 1981 Education Act."

In the debate in the other place on 11 June 1992 on Second Reading of the Education (Amendment) Bill, Baroness Blatch, the Education Minister, announced the Government's proposals for legislation to deal with the main problems facing parents of children with special educational needs. The proposals include some important points. First, there is to be legislation on the length of time that authorities may take to assess children's special needs, which is an important aspect of the current problems. Secondly, parents of children who have been statemented will be given the right to state a choice of school. I find that complaints by constituents about the choice of school are common. Parents see a school that is ideally suited for their children and then find that the children have been assigned to another school, often much further away.

Another proposal that has been announced is the introduction of a comprehensive and coherent system to deal with appeals under the 1981 Act. All those proposals are much welcomed. The Government intend to carry out full consultation, so today's debate can play an important part in feeding in some of the concerns of our constituents and we shall be able to make some input in the consultation process.

I was a member of the Committee on the 1981 Act. It was an unusual Committee because it was one of only two Special Standing Committees in which we took evidence from outside organisations and individuals for two sittings before we began the Standing Committee proceedings. I thought that that was an extremely good idea and I am sorry that it has not been pursued to a greater extent with other legislation. The Special Standing Committee procedure enabled us to take evidence from people such as Mary Warnock, who was a key witness.

I recall discussions about Mary Warnock's estimates of the 2 per cent. of children who needed statementing and to go to special schools and the 18 per cent. who could go into mainstream schools. We know now that the figure of 2 per cent. has been used as a maximum figure by many local authorities. They get near 2 per cent. and they then call a halt to statementing regardless of the number of children with handicaps in their areas. I understand that Mary Warnock has more recently expressed the view that her original estimate of 2 per cent. was probably too low. The Audit Commission report shows that, due to insufficient guidance on what constitutes special needs in the 1981 Act, most statements are deliberately vague and lack specific comments on the children's needs. That is done to allow local authorities to avoid an open-ended financial commitment. The Audit Commission report also confirmed what the all-party disablement group had been saying—that some local authorities were statementing far fewer than 2 per cent. of children, some being right down to under 1 per cent., while others reached a level of 3·3 per cent.

Looking back at the 1981 Act, it is worth remembering, first, that a clear legal framework was provided for assessment procedures which may lead to a statement which determines the child's individual special educational needs and the provision intended to meet them. Secondly, the Act requires the education of pupils with special needs in mainstream schools wherever possible, subject to certain conditions. Thirdly, the Act established the parental right—a key point raised by the hon. Member for

Cambridge—of parents to be partners with the local education authority and relevant professionals in decisions about their children's education.

The hon. Member for Cambridge made a key point about advocacy. As a sponsor of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, which was promoted by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), I fully support the implementation of the provisions in the Act, which have not yet been implemented, that will ensure proper advocacy and representation.

The Education Act 1981 was widely welcomed by disability organisations, which continue to support its guiding philosophy and the intentions behind it, but it has become clear to all of us that a number of serious problems exist in the Act and in the way in which it has been implemented by some local education authorities. That has resulted in a wave of complaints and inquiries from parents in dispute with their local education authorities, and hon. Members have been on the receiving end of many anguished letters and surgery cases.

In January, I helped to launch a parental support group in an area covering a large part of the southern half of Devon. There was a packed meeting of parents, including an hon. Member, who is not able to be here today, who has a handicapped child. At the meeting, I heard of the frustrations being experienced by parents of dyslexic children and of children with severe sensory handicaps. Some of the difficulties related to the differences that parents had with local authority educational psychologists. In general, however, one came away with the conclusion that parents pretty well knew best what their children required and that the frustration that they experienced was in knowing what their children required and being unable to obtain it.

Many of the frustrations are being taken on board by local government and national Government with the review now taking place. Devon county council has published a major consultation paper covering the whole subject of special educational needs, although that in itself is causing considerable controversy as a result of some of the points made. I will quote the council on the question of post-19 education, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Cambridge. For years, I have been trying to impress upon the local education authority the fact that there is a statutory obligation on local authorities to provide post-19 education. I received a letter, which I sent to Devon county council. On 16 March came the following reply:

"I am concerned about the need for continuity of provision for young people with special educational needs beyond the age of 19. Mr. Howarth's letter of 22 March 1990 to you states that local education authorities are not justified in automatically withdrawing funding from special educational needs students when they reach the age of 19."

That was a specific statement of the position, but the letter continued:

"It is our practice to continue to fund students to the end of the academic year during which they are 19. However, pressures elsewhere in the budget make it impossible to fund these students beyond that."

So, on the one hand, we have a clear statement of the statutory requirement laid down by the Government and, on the other, the local education authority says, "Sorry, but we can't carry it out."

We all know that students with handicaps need extra time: they need to continue past the normal age to achieve certain levels of education. I hope that that point will be clearly established in the changes that are now taking place.

RADAR, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, and IPSEA, the Independent Panel of Special Education Advisers, have assembled and collated a wide-ranging list of examples of problems with local authorities. I shall cite a couple because they give a clear idea of what is needed to correct the position.

Some authorities refuse to assess children. One local education authority in the south-east of England concluded that a six-year-old girl with spina bifida required a statement, but, instead of issuing one under section 7 of the Act—which is a clear legal duty—it wrote to the parents saying that a statement would be

"issued and the recommended support made available when resources allow".

That is a clear example of an LEA's failure to carry out a statutory responsibility.

In some cases, vaguely worded statements are drawn up so as to give little indication of the kind or amount of provision needed. That is in clear breach of schedule 1 in part II of the Act. An LEA in the north-west issued a statement for a seven-year-old boy with juvenile chronic arthritis:

"some help required from an adult".

That statement should have specified clearly the boy's need for a learning support assistant for a specified amount of time, to give fullest possible access to the national curriculum and broader school curriculum.

Some LEAs are refusing to carry out an assessment or issue a statement. An LEA in the south-east has instituted, as a matter of policy, a moratorium on assessments. Another is operating a minimal statementing programme. Such policies clearly contravene the legal duties laid down in section 5 of the Act.

Other LEAs are going slow on assessments: we have all received examples from our constituents.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth):** I have heard serious allegations of the kind that my hon. Friend makes and they have proved to be unfounded and the result of scaremongering. I know that my hon. Friend would not indulge in that. If he is not prepared to name the authorities involved now, perhaps he will let me know later. I shall certainly want to look into those cases if what my hon. Friend says is true.

**Sir John Hannam:** I am convinced that the examples are based on evidence. In meetings of the all-party group with my hon. Friend's predecessors, specific evidence has been given, and I have letters in my office detailing the exact cases. I shall be pleased to give my hon. Friend the evidence. There should be no doubt in his mind that the crux of our concern is that the wide variations in local authorities' implementation of the Act has caused the problems. I hope that my hon. Friend will not feel that he must engage in a blanket defence of LEAs. After all, he had to write to me admitting that there were serious concerns about the implementation of the Act. Authorities' performance varies widely. Some are good and some are very bad, and we should surely aim to achieve a certain minimum standard of performance throughout the country.

**Ms. Hilary Armstrong** (Durham, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, when the Audit

*[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]*

Commission examined the matter, it concluded that it was the Government's responsibility to give much clearer guidance on which children should be statemented and which non-statemented children should have help made available to them? It is not clear what is expected of LEAs, which have an open-ended commitment and which face increasingly tight controls on their expenditure. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is what has led to many of the problems that he has identified?

**Sir John Hannam:** That is the point that I am trying to make, and it emerged vey clearly early in the Committee stage of the 1981 Act. The resources that would be needed could not be defined: at that stage no one knew what they were, and local authorities certainly could not provide information on the problems that they would encounter when they set about the integration of education for disabled and handicapped students. As is so often the case, it was a question of that expenditure evolving.

Since then, expenditure on special needs education has expanded tremendously, but the power of local authorities to use the money allocated as they see fit and in the ways that are best from their point of view is still a major problem. That is why we have argued for strict ring fencing of certain types of expenditure, such as expenditure on community care, which is in the headlines at the moment. In this case, statutory requirements have been laid down and provision made; if local authorities are failing to comply, we must ensure that they receive the necessary guidance to enable them to understand exactly what their statutory responsibilities are.

Some local authorities complete assessments in a matter of a few months while others take a year or more. The Audit Commission pointed out that the average was running at about three months over the maximum period of six months allowed.

Another problem is the rewriting of statements and the annual review—often done without any regard to changes in needs or to the due process. An LEA in the north-west, for example, recommended the transfer of an 11-year-old boy with cerebral palsy and numeracy and literacy difficulties from a mainstream primary to a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The parents were told that there were insufficient mainstream places. The change was made without seeking professional advice or consulting the parents. That is strictly illegal under the Act, and the pupil lost a whole term's schooling before the case was resolved and his original statement reinstated.

The parents of an 11-year-old girl with multiple physical and learning disabilities were presented with a fait accompli by an LEA in the north-east, which told them that she would be transferred from an out-of-county residential school to a local school for pupils with severe learning difficulties 12 miles from her home. Those are typical of the cases that have been brought to hon. Members and we could produce many more examples to illustrate the problems that we face in ensuring that the Act is working properly.

The Audit Commission report confirms that many of those problems exist and pinpoints "deficiencies" in the Act and its implementation. First, the vague definition of special needs in the Act means that receipt of a statement can depend on where a pupil lives rather than on his or her real needs. Secondly, there is inconsistent statementing within LEAs so that children with lower levels of needs have statements while others with greater needs do not. That brings us back to the whole question of the determination, professionalism and resources of schools, parents and their advisers. Thirdly, schools are not properly accountable to parents for the progress made by SEN pupils or for the resources that they receive.

Important changes are taking place in education. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 transfers responsibility for further education from LEAs to the new FE funding councils. All the disability organisations are concerned that, with only nine months to go before the new system will be in place, the administrative arrangements for the delivery and provision of special further education have still not been spelt out publicly.

I received a letter from Deaf Accord which is a consortium of organisations for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing people. Those organisations have long expressed their concern about the future of their children when their schools become grant maintained. They want local education authorities to retain their ability to provide adequate specialist services for hearing-impaired children. When deaf students go on into further and higher education courses, often at a later age than their peers, they will need adequate communications support.

While the new Further and Higher Education Act 1992 states that the funding councils

"shall have regard to the needs of students with disabilities",

there is no guarantee that a student's needs will be assessed and provided for locally, which will often mean past the age of 19.

Access to further education courses is essential for deaf students, not only so that they can compete on more equal terms in the job market, but because, as I mentioned earlier, many of them need extra time to catch up on the development of language skills and knowledge acquisition that has taken longer because of communication difficulties.

Whether it is lip reading, speech therapy, special equipment or other provisions which can help handicapped students to increase their independence and enjoy a richer life experience, the reality is that much more needs to be done to achieve reasonable standards of provision across the country.

I welcome the Government's announcement of the consultation document on the proposals in respect of special education and especially the tribunals to resolve disputes between parents and LEAs. Substantial progress towards integration has been made, but we must not forget the crucial roles played by our special schools. Without their dedication to the severely impaired children, many people now living, working and fulfilling good lives would not have found that possible.

Let us put the final pieces of the 1981 Act into place and remove the worries and uncertainties facing the parents and families of handicapped youngsters. I am confident that the proposals go a very long way towards securing those objectives.

10.31 am

**Mr. Tony Worthington** (Clydebank and Milngavie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on her excellent speech and success in the raffle which seems to run this place. I hope that she will always be successful in that regard. I also congratulate her on her choice of subject which is very important. I thank

her for referring in her motion to people and not just to children. I intend to refer to the post-16 situation, although I recognise the importance of the pre-16 situation.

I realise that as I shall be referring to the post-16 situation the Minister will probably not be able to respond to my points. However, as a former Employment Minister, he may have some memory of the areas to which I shall refer. I cannot remember whether he was responsible for youth training or employment training.

**Mr. Forth** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Worthington:** I see the Minister shaking his head so, in this case, his ignorance will be forgiven.

The split between education and training is one example of the difficulties that we face. There is a transfer of youngsters at the age of 16 to the Department of Employment for youth training. That cannot be justified. We need an integrated provision post-16 and I should prefer it if that continues to be an education responsibility, rather than the responsibility of the Department of Employment. That would certainly be Labour party policy in Scotland.

I expect that the Minister will draw attention to the comments of Baroness Blatch who said that the Government had acted very quickly on the Audit Commission report. I should welcome the setting up of a special needs tribunal. However, I must point out that the report made some attacks on local authorities and the Government therefore reacted very quickly indeed.

Post-16 provision is conducted in secrecy. Youth training is a matter of commercial confidentiality. There is no right of appeal about whether one has received an adequate offer of training post-16. I am interested to learn from the Minister's response whether he is willing to consider, if there is to be a tribunal, that it should be applied to training appeals as well as to school-age education.

At the moment, special educational needs are transferred at the age of 16 to local enterprise companies in Scotland or to the training and enterprise councils in England and Wales. Training in Scotland is swamped within the local enterprise companies. Perhaps understandably, the LECs are dominated by the idea of economic development.

I have a report from *Scottish Business Insider* on Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies. It is instructive that the chairman of Scottish Enterprise did not mention training when he described what Scottish Enterprise had done in its first year, even though the bulk of the money that Scottish Enterprise receives is for training.

It is obvious that economic development comes first in the ethos of Scottish Enterprise. That is not surprising, because that is how the body was recruited and how the local enterprise companies have been set up. The report to which I have referred contains 19 case studies from local enterprise companies and they all concentrate on economic development. The special needs educational training within training is mentioned only once in the document.

I am concerned that training, particularly for special needs, will be dominated by economic development within the LECs. That is not surprising, given that the LECs took over from the Scottish Development Agency. The SDA swallowed the Training Agency and its personnel. The Training Agency personnel were not skilled in special needs. In many cases, they were not skilled in training; they assembled programmes. We must upgrade the quality of work.

When I heard about this debate last Thursday, I wrote to LECs throughout Scotland to inform them. I am grateful to the overwhelming number of LECs that responded and for the information that they provided. In some cases, I very much approve of the commitment to special educational needs.

What definition of special educational needs or special training needs is used within LECs? I received a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) about the Government's youth training and employment training programmes. He wrote:

"Both programmes are primarily intended to cater for people who are capable of completing a course of training within a reasonable timescale and of taking up employment afterwards. This definition can, of course, include people with mental handicap;"

He said that, because that was what the letter was about. he continued:

"where this is so, the Government require that they be given, along with other unemployed disabled people, a priority for places on Employment Training; or, in the case of young disabled people, the guarantee of an offer of a Youth Training place."

However, the priority is that one should be almost immediately capable of taking up a job afterwards. The Government's guarantee remains only for two years and there is then a black hole in respect of provision. Voluntary organisations consider that there is no clarity. The Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped says that it is not clear what special needs mean and that

"The definition of 'special needs' is not clear, and the emphasis on positive outcomes, with the implication that the only real positive outcome is a job, is a deterrent to providing for people with learning difficulties."

In a city such as Glasgow, where male unemployment is 20 per cent., many people with special needs certainly have no chance of a job. Because of the private sector's neglect of those with special needs, only schemes that are run by agencies such as the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped cater for them. As the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped says, that is not ideal in terms of integration into the community.

A huge issue is mounting up for the Department of Employment, and it had better face up to it soon. I refer to meeting the training guarantee. Ministers north and south of the border say that it is being met. Careers officers north of the border, and certainly in the west of Scotland, say that it is not being met. In March 1992, the Strathclyde careers service reported a shortfall of nearly 3,500 places in the west of Scotland and a 1,316 shortfall in the Glasgow area. In Glasgow terms, those 1,300 places are equal to two secondary schools. In terms of fourth-year leavers, that is about the output of 10 to a dozen schools for which there are said by the careers services not to be places.

In contrast, the Government and many local enterprise companies say that they are meeting the guarantee. Mr. Stuart Gulliver of the Glasgow Development Agency states:

"In Glasgow, we have so far been able to meet the needs of all young people who have actively sought a training place."

That is interesting—

*[Mr. Worthington]*

"actively sought a training place."

In other words, if one feels that the training is no good, that there are no opportunities or that the Government's training is a synonym for exploitation and one stops looking, the Government are meeting that guarantee. However, bearing in mind the Glasgow shortfall of 1,300, for instance, that is not good enough and Ministers cease to be credible in respect of what they are providing. In Scotland in 1988, 41,000 employment training places were available. This year, the figure is 18,000, yet the Government say that guarantee and A groups are being met.

There is evidence of people with special needs—the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped has reported on this matter—being pushed away from employment training towards employment action in which there is no training component. Scottish Borders Enterprise states:

"With yet another cut in the Adult Training budget expected for 1993-94 it is difficult to see how this LEC can again ring fence training for special needs at this level."

So far, it has been able to meet the need for special needs provision only by taking from other sectors of its funding. It goes on:

"In any case no increase in funding levels reduces the quality of training when taking account of inflation."

The quality of training is falling as well. Scottish Borders Enterprise further states:

"The cost of training people with special needs is high in comparison to mainstream training. Presently an LEC can deliver this type of training, but only if all other training provision can be delivered at a reduced cost. The unit price for Special Needs Training is far in excess of the unit price drawn down from Scottish Enterprise. Some recognition of the high cost of this training should be given by Government and a separate funding structure introduced."

Considerable problems are stacking up in terms of the quality of training for those with special needs. It is particularly objectionable that that is occurring in such an atmosphere of secrecy. We have a world of commercial confidentiality. I do not agree that publicly funded training should involve commercial confidentiality. That is the wrong approach. Contractors and subcontractors are told that they must not breathe a word about the contents of the contracts that they sign with local enterprise companies and that such matters are subject to complete commercial confidentiality.

I recently received a very useful letter from the relevant Minister in the Department of Employment. He said that one could not allow information about training places to be made public because that would break the commercial confidentiality between the Government and the relevant local enterprise company. But who included commercial confidentiality? The Government did. The Government have said that that matter is in the world of commerce. If such information were available, it would not stop firms, private training providers, voluntary organisations or local authorities putting forward tenders.

My limited knowledge of economics—it goes back a good many years—tells me that the perfect market is one in which people know everything, an open market. It is one in which people know what others are offering. The Government seem to believe that if there is competition in secret, quality will go up. In general, if something costs less there is a cut in quality rather than an increase in quality. Certainly, there are exceptions to that. For example, the current edition of *Which?* warns that one should not buy Rayban sunglasses. With Rayban sunglasses at their current prices, one is not getting anything extra, according to *Which?* Generally, the pattern is that one gets what one pays for and that, if unit prices are constantly forced down, quality will go.

There must be openness about training contracts. One should know how public money is being spent, what it is being spent on, and who is being trained by whom and for what purpose. That should not be a matter of commercial confidentiality. There is a squeeze on special needs and it will get worse next year because local enterprise companies or TECs will not be able to ring-fence their training.

The ethos of the local enterprise companies is to provide funding which is related to output. When people contract with the LECs 25 per cent. of their money is held back and is not paid unless they achieve results. Therefore, there is payment by results. I do not disagree with some aspects of that. Output and results in youth training and employment training have been woefully low in terms of qualifications. However, such an ethos puts pressures on the LECs to back out of special needs training and concentrate on sections of youth training and employment training where it is easy to achieve results.

The LECs and, I assume, the TECs have responded to the requirement to produce results by introducing literacy and numeracy targets for special needs training. I have no quarrel with that, but there is a lot more to special needs training than literacy and numeracy. Training must involve physical, social, emotional and recreational competence as well as occupational competence. There must be much more monitoring of quality in the LECs and TECs. We shall certainly press for that.

I wish to spend a little time on anxieties about the Further and Higher Education Act (Scotland) 1992, which has its equivalent in England and Wales. The Bill was considerably improved in Standing Committee for the purposes of special needs.

I pay tribute to the Minister who was involved and to the Opposition members of the Committee. We worked closely together to improve special needs provision. We are delighted that for the first time in a Scottish Act, special needs of the post-16s are mentioned. We had it written into the Act that local authorities should be consulted and that development plans should be drawn up. The Scottish Office was required to lay down guidelines for the independent boards of management of the newly independent colleges on meeting special needs requirements. That is all to the good, but it leaves some problems.

A particular problem is that the responsibility for paying for a great deal of special needs training has been left with the local authorities. The bursaries have to be paid by the local authorities. I believe that the further education sector should not have been taken away from the local authorities in any case. Tensions have been created because local authorities have had their colleges taken away, but have been left with responsibility for payment. The Secretary of State and independent people will set the fees that the local authorities have to pay.

Considerable sums of money are involved in special needs provision. My local authority sometimes has to make decisions that involve fees and residential charges of about £25,000 a year for one person. I wish to ensure that, between them, the local authorities and the Government guarantee that quality of provision continues.

In the past, larger local authorities have created an integrated service. In Strathclyde every college provided a full-time course for those with special educational needs, but some made specialist provision. Motherwell college of further education has made specialist residential provision because the region was not able to evade its responsibilities. We said that one of our colleges must make residential provision. Another makes specialist provision for the deaf.

I am worried that, even though we altered the Bill a great deal in Committee, colleges have been told that the drive of further education colleges should be overwhelmingly vocational. If the private sector is brought in to run a college, clearly the vocational element will be strong. However, good further education provision involves a great deal more than vocational training. It is still feared that colleges will run the courses that attract cash. The people who have cash tend to be in the private sector. They tend not to be those with special educational needs.

In Scotland the ethos of special needs training is a complete mess because the Government have not thought it out. The colleges and the Secretary of State have a duty to provide all forms of further education, yet the local authorities have the ability and the power to do that. Co-ordination will be extremely difficult.

I am especially worried about a neglected matter which we must consider. Employment, education and training are an important part of community care. There seems to be a massive deficit in the debate about community care. We talk about health and social work provision and about the Department of Employment, but there is a chasm. What do people, either those in institutions or those whom we avoid putting into institutions, do from Monday to Friday during the time of the day when other people go to work? What do they do from nine to five? Clearly, employment, training and education have a major part to play. However, in all our discussions about community care there is a chasm which is not filled by transferring responsibility for education and training to LECs or TECs. Community care is about more than that.

I am critical of all parties. We have allowed post-16 provision to be segmented. One profession has control of a group of people for a time. So from nought to five years old people belong to the Department of Health. From five to 16 years they belong to education. Post-16 they are transferred to the LECs for a couple of years. We must examine and integrate provision for people over 16 with special educational needs.

I cannot remember all the schemes that the Government have introduced over the years. They started with the job creation programme. The Government have introduced various schemes designed for the so-called normal population. The local voluntary organisations have sought to skew their provision to obtain money from the Manpower Services Commission, the Training Agency or, now, the LECs. Therefore, provision for special educational needs always comes from programmes that were not designed for that purpose.

We must consider education, health, social work and voluntary provision on a cross-departmental basis and ask what we should provide. Until we do that, we shall continue to make inadequate provisions. The process should be transparent and open and all parties should take part. At present, the position for those leaving school is unsatisfactory. We cannot find out what is happening to them in terms of training, its quality and its adequacy, because that is covered by commercial confidentiality. We must open up training. All parties must admit that our provision for adults with special needs is inadequate. I hope that the Government will respond to some of the points that I have made.

10.59 am

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): I hope that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the paths that he has trodden. It is not because the matters that he raised were not important, and I hope that he will understand.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on introducing the debate and giving us the opportunity to discuss this important subject—it could not be more important. I hope that the House will forgive me if I have to leave for a time after speaking. I have the Adjournment debate today and I have to do some other work in between.

In 1981, I was a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Education Bill in that year. That Bill made provision for children with special educational needs. The Select Committee has also studied special needs education since that time. We came to a number of important conclusions.

First, the Select Committee felt that there should be a standard procedure for statementing children. We came to that conclusion because we found extraordinarily divergent arrangements for statementing when we visited schools in different local authorities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter said, some of those procedures were working well, but we felt others to be inadequate.

Secondly, the Select Committee felt that in many cases it took too long for a child to be statemented. We wanted it to take not more than two years—that is quite long enough. At my surgeries I meet people who have asked for statements, have had to wait an undue length of time for them and have not found them satisfactory when they arrived. No doubt my colleagues have had the same experience.

I would fence with the hon. Member for Cambridge over her statement that only one parent in seven learnt anything from statementing——

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** No.

**Mr. Greenway:** I hope that I am not misrepresenting the hon. Lady.

**Mrs. Campbell:** That information came from the Audit Commission's report, which stated that 13 per cent.—about one in seven—of parents find the information given in the statement valuable. The rest find it valuable for other reasons or do not find it valuable at all.

**Mr. Greenway:** I accept that. There is no disagreement between us over the facts. Many parents find statements valuable and learn much from them. From my experience in education—and I have quite a lot—I know that many parents are stabilised by the process of talking with informed psychologists or teachers about the behaviour of their child and the child's educational needs, and that in itself is a valuable process, as I am sure that the hon. Lady would agree.

*[Mr. Greenway]*

Special schools continue to have special value. I do not disagree with Warnock, but special schools have done, and continue to do, a marvellous job for children. The special school continues to have a place, as it gives children security and concentrates on the needs of the children being cared for. There is a great deal more to be said for them, but those two points are substantial. Parents relate to an institution which deals with the needs of their child, and that is almost beyond price in educational and social terms.

I do not want special schools to disappear, as Warnock advocated, but that does not mean that I do not understand the strong arguments for integrating children with special needs in the education process.

My last school had 2,200 pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. It was a mixed comprehensive and contained a partial hearing unit for 70 children. They integrated into the school very well and came out of the unit for about 80 per cent. of the week. As deputy headmaster, I was responsible for the curriculum, for discipline and for various other aspects of school life. That ensured that I watched how those children integrated in the school, how they responded to ordinary pupils and vice versa. It was invaluable for all concerned. Therefore, I accept what Warnock says, but let us not get rid of special schools or advocate that we do so.

The John Chilton school in my constituency is a complex of first and middle schools—there is soon to be a primary school—a nursery school and a good comprehensive. Children escape—perhaps that is not the right word—from work in the special school to go to the high school, and to what will become the primary school, and then return to the special school. That seems to me to be the ideal. There must be a combination of the two—special schools which work with ordinary schools. That is where children score best and that is what I want to happen, but it is not the full integration recommended by Warnock and provided for in the 1981 Act.

The hon. Member for Cambridge and her colleagues are mistaken to vilify grant-maintained schools. They are out of touch with political and social developments that they will have to come to terms with. There are some signs that they are beginning to do so, but if they do not, they will be left miles behind and will not move with the educational developments of the times, which are in tune with pupils and parents.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Greenway:** The hon. Lady shakes her head. She is entitled to her view, but that is what I and my colleagues feel and many Labour Members agree with us. However, that is not my point. I want the money for statemented children in grant-maintained schools to be ring fenced. That is the only way to ensure that they get the proper provision that they must have. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will at least consider that suggestion. If money is ring fenced for such important provision, schools—whether they are grant maintained, within local authorities or under local management; whoever is putting up the money—will not be tempted to refuse children on the grounds that they are statemented and therefore require special resources, such as one teacher to a child, which will be expensive. In the interests of our children and of the nation that temptation must be put aside.

I think that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) wishes to intervene.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): No, I was agreeing.

**Mr. Greenway:** I am delighted that we agree. I feel strongly that the Department of Education and the Welsh Office should issue guidance to define a child's level of need, which should trigger the procedures of the Education Act 1981. That was a valuable suggestion from the Audit Commission, and if the Department could set out those guidelines and procedures we would be on our way towards a standardised procedure. Much would be achieved by establishing the standardised procedure that I have described, which was called for by the Select Committee. There would no longer be unequal provision. It is not fair for children with a special need to have good provision in one area but be under-provided for in another. How can that be fair in any society?

I should like to issue a warning, as a longstanding practitioner in and out of the classroom. The Warnock report showed clearly and persuasively that 5 per cent. of children have special educational needs. In large schools such as those that I described earlier, many children have special educational needs of some kind, whether behavioural or emotional. Ordinary schools have a responsibility and an ability to absorb children with various difficulties. If the teaching profession does not make it its business to do that, the line can become blurred and more children can be said to have special needs and behavioural problems which cannot be contained, simply because the profession is not doing all that it can for those children. It is a tragedy when children are put out of school, especially when they have emotional difficulties.

I recently heard of a boy living not far from my constituency who was suspended from his school. His father had died two or three months previously and the boy had a row with a teacher. He went back and vandalised the teacher's car, the teacher called the police and the whole affair built up. The boy has now been through a nasty court case and has been sent away. His mother is beside herself. She is a good and responsible person with a strong religious faith and has done her utmost to help. The boy has been pushed out of the system, to his great detriment. That tragedy should have been avoided.

I strongly agree with the joint Audit Commission and HMI report, which said:

> "Statutory time limits for the completion of assessments and statements should be set, with redress for parents if these are not met."

At present, parents have no redress if a statement is not produced for them within a reasonable time. That is unfair and places strong emotional pressure on parents, which they should not have to bear. Time limits should and could be set. It will require hard work by all concerned and may require additional resources, but it should be done.

11.12 am

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on introducing the debate and giving us an opportunity, at an appropriate time, to comment on special education for those with special needs. It is particularly appropriate in

the wake of the publication of the Audit Commission report, a valuable document which has brought many new aspects to our attention.

When the Education Act was passed in 1981, there were high hopes. It was the International Year for Disabled People and we saw the Act as a substantial step forward and hoped that it would achieve real changes. Some of those hopes have been achieved, but there is a long way to go. At that time, I had a personal direct interest because I had two boys at a special school. Since then, I have tried to be involved, through the all-party disablement group and in other ways, in issues which arise.

The House and the Government have significant problems with which to deal. None the less, I pay tribute to teachers in both special and mainstream schools who work with those with special educational needs. They do sterling work and any criticism is not directed at the teachers in question. We have two excellent special schools in my constituency—Pendalar in Caernarfon and Hafod Lon near Pwllheli—and I accept that there will always be a need for a certain number of speical schools, although we should move towards as much integration as possible where appropriate.

The problems with the Act fall into five categories. First, integration has not worked as fully or evenly as we had hoped. Secondly, the statementing system is far from satisfactory. Thirdly, the availability of specialist staff, support services and therapists is inadequate, which has obvious resources implications. Fourthly, changes in the education structure as a result of recent legislation have caused problems. The local management of schools, in particular, has implications for special education. Fifthly, a potential problem may arise more quickly in Wales than elsewhere, but will also arise in England, is the effect of changes in the structure of local government on those provisions.

There has been a great variation in integration from area to area. The services and approach that a pupil receives often depend on where the pupil lives. Some local education authorities have been slow in implementing the 1981 Act which, again, may be due to lack of resources. I remember noting the comments made by the Select Committee on Education in its fifth report on staffing for pupils with special educational needs in 1989-90. Paragraph 24 of that report says:

"The extent to which LEAs and governing bodies can implement the suggested staffing model, given existing staffing levels and current financial circumstances, requires clarification. The previous Committee noted that lack of resources had restricted implementation of the 1981 Act and that a commitment of extra resources would be needed if further significant progress were to be made. This is still our view. The DES should not recommend staffing levels to LEAs unless it is prepared to make funds available for these to be implemented."

The Committee's comment still bears scrutiny today. I believe that there should be minimum staffing recommendations, and the funds which are needed should be made available centrally.

In that context, I wish to point out the needs of certain categories of children and young people with special educational needs. The integration of deaf children into mainstream schools can be achieved only if adequate advisory and peripatetic services are available. Those are not always available due to lack of resources. Our attention has been drawn to the fact that only 26 per cent. of blind children receive mobility training and, in mainstream schools, 90 per cent. have no mobility training whatever.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) spoke about provision for children over the age of 16. The provision of education in long-stay hospitals for those with severe problems will be in question when funding goes from the LEAs to the further education funding councils. Will resources be made available for education provision at long-stay hospitals?

At the other end of the scale, it is worth reminding ourselves that the statementing procedure can be commenced at the age of two. That has an implication for nursery education under the 1981 Act. It is important that one identifies special educational needs at an early age. Some LEAs have not been providing nursery places, and some parents of children with special needs have had to pay for those provisions.

MENCAP has drawn attention to the problem, saying:

"at least one Local Education Authority parents whose children have statements of special educational needs are no longer receiving their nursery place free of charge. This development has occurred since the implementation of the Childrens Act. It is now the case that assessment places once paid for by the LEA are no longer being funded and social services who run the education provision are charging parents under the Childrens Act for the nursery place their child occupies.

In other words, children and parents are being charged for provision made under sections of their 1981 statement."

The Minister may wish to consider that serious matter.

Defects occur in the current statementing system. The recent Audit Commission report has drawn attention to the massive variation in statementing reports. The proportion of statemented pupils varies from 0·8 to 3·3 per cent. That is an enormous variation. One would not expect such a statistical variation if the same policies and guidelines were being implemented in all areas. The workings of the present system need to be investigated.

The length of time one has to wait for a statement also needs to be investigated. The guidelines are designed to achieve a statement within six months, but in practice the process can take as long as three years. Such a delay makes the entire system useless, because if one has to wait that long for a response to needs that were perceived three years ago, vital time in a child's development is lost.

An example of such delay has been passed to me by the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, RADAR. It concerns a young girl, Janine, an eight-year-old pupil with epilepsy, little motor control and behavioural and learning difficulties. RADAR states:

"An assessment was begun by the former ILEA in February 1990 and handed over to her new Inner London LEA in April 1990. She is still without a Statement. Clearly this situation is not attributable to administrative transfer or delay. It indicates that the LEA is stalling so that expenditure on the pupil can be deferred until resources allow."

The Minister asked his hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) for examples of such delay and I believe that that example cited needs to be examined.

**Mr. Forth:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that part of the problem with the existing provisions is that many parents, who are anxious and eager to do the best for their child, contribute to prolonging that procedure by exercising their existing extensive rights to produce new information or to put new arguments on behalf of their

*[Mr. Forth]*

child? Tragically, that is often the case. If we could deal with that practice it would go a long way to overcoming the existing problems.

**Mr. Wigley:** I accept that parents' involvement can delay the procedure, but not for three years. We should have a slick procedure so that an LEA, or an LEA in conjunction with professionals, can assess the needs of an individual child. The parents or those representing that child should have the opportunity to react to that assessment, and if there is any disagreement it should be subject to an appeals procedure as quickly as possible. There will always be some delay, but it should not be anything like as long as three years. I am sure that all hon. Members would agree on that.

When statementing, some LEAs are not driven by the objective needs of a child. Unfortunately, they are conditioned by their perceived ability to fulfil services. Therefore, they will statement needs in line with what they think they can deliver rather than what might be sufficient to meet the absolute need of a child. That underlines the need for greater consistency and objectivity. The Government must undertake the strategic role of issuing adequate guidelines and monitoring LEAs to ensure that they carry out their responsibilities.

I do not believe that the Minister was suggesting that there should be less parental involvement in the system. If there is such a lack of parental involvement or representation on behalf of a child, the danger is that that child will receive a less comprehensive statement and his needs will not be adequately met. Therefore, there is a danger that those children with special educational needs who have more articulate parents may get a better deal. Perhaps that is what leads to some of the delays. We need the system to work properly.

The appeals procedure also has a number of shortcomings. It involves the work of two members of the LEA and one lay person. In my case two county councillors together with a lay person consider an appeal. The appeal procedure is not independent and therefore the danger is that if an LEA believes that it has a shortage of funds and resources to meet requirements, its appeal procedure will merely reiterate that attitude. Either the statementing system or the appeals procedure must be independent—it would probably be easier to make the appeals procedure independent. I am aware of the speech made a couple of weeks ago by Baroness Blatch and I should like to know from the Minister how the Government intend to review the appeals procedure and when that process will be completed. What is the likely outcome?

The lack of specialist staff is often due to lack of resources, and sometimes to lack of training. The Audit Commission report says:

"Consideration should be given to introducing financial incentives to LEAs to implement fully the 1981 Education Act."

I agree wholeheartedly with that, but it is worth noting that my LEA has had no additional central funding for the implementation of the 1981 Act. That has led to some of the current problems.

Speech therapists are among the specialist staff who are required. I draw to the Minister's attention the way in which the Welsh Office has interpreted the law in an attachment to circular 54/89. I appreciate that this is not his prime responsibility, so perhaps he could pass it on to his colleagues at the Welsh Office. That attachment states that education authorities should provide speech therapists for statemented children if health authorities for any reason fail. That is unsatisfactory. Health authorities are funded directly by central Government and they may fail to provide that service due to lack of resources. The buck is then passed to the LEA, which must find its own resources—by raising the poll tax or whatever is necessary—and, according to the Welsh Office interpretation, it has a statutory obligation to do so. I am not arguing that there should not be such a statutory obligation, but for goodness sake let us be sure that the resources are there. We should not allow for a systematic method by which central Government can avoid responsibility. Priority should be given to providing extra resources so that extra speech therapists can be trained. The Audit Commission report has noted the need for resources to be transferred to meet the staffing targets for such specialists.

Whether dyslexia is a recognised disability is subject to much interpretation. Some educationists do not recognise it as such. A youngster in my area, now aged 13, has only just been recognised as suffering from it, but has had the problem for several years. Teachers, particularly in primary schools, should receive more training to recognise the signs of dyslexia so that they can give some help to pupils. Training courses are available and there would not have enormous resource implications. The University College of North Wales in Bangor has an excellent course. Such training should be encouraged.

The Education Reform Act 1988 has given schools certain characteristics, which have implications for special educational needs. First, schools now compete for children. Secondly, schools are funded as a result of formulae. Thirdly, crude attainment levels and assessment figures are published. Those three factors are worrying, because they militate against the needs of children with special needs. The results are already apparent. Schools are increasingly reluctant—or even refuse—to accept children with special needs. There has been a massive increase in formal statementing and in my area the special school population has increased. That may or may not be a general trend. The amount of integration in schools has also diminished and schools that have opted out are following selective admission policies.

It is fine to devolve as much as possible to individual schools—I am all in favour of that—but the LEAs must retain powers to monitor and ensure that standards are maintained and, indeed, raised. There is a danger of a resource drift as a result of the changes in the education structure. Money that was intended for special educational needs may be redirected for other priorities at the schools level. That is unacceptable and I note with interest what the hon. Member for Ealing, North said about ring fencing.

Special education may also be affected by the forthcoming changes in the structure of local government in Wales. A White Paper on the subject is being issued in October and I believe that Wales may have about 24 small all-purpose authorities which will be education authorities. There are good reasons for that, and there is generally all-party support for unitary authorities. However, there are worries about the implications for special education. Will those small authorities have the necessary specialist staff? Will they be able to adopt a strategic approach? If

not, which strategic organisation will monitor and oversee the requirements of children with special educational needs? I should be glad if the Welsh Office could clarify its position, as the implications are far reaching.

Under the present Government, more market forces are coming into play. If there are also weaker local education authorities, the combination of those two factors could result in children with special educational needs suffering. I conclude by drawing attention to the recommendations of the Audit Commission, which include the following:

"guidance should be issued by the Department for Education . . . and Welsh Office to define the level of need in a child which should trigger the use of the 1981 Education Act procedures . . .

LEAs should be given guidance to help them define the responsibilities of ordinary schools for pupils with special needs and to clarify when the LEA will itself provide extra help . . .

parents of pupils with statements of special need should have the right to state a preference for their child's school, within limits . . .

consideration should be given to introducing some incentive for LEAs to implement fully the 1981 Education Act"—

Hear, hear to that.

It continues:

"statements should be changed to give a greater focus on the objectives for the child and on the school's responsibilities . . . statutory time limits for the completion of assessments and statements should be set, with redress for parents if these are not met".

The commission also recommends steps that LEAs should take to improve provision. It states that

"a clear distinction between the role of purchaser of services (the LEA) and provider of services (usually the school) is required."

The commission makes another important point when it states:

"all LEAs should follow the lead of the minority of LEAs which have increased the capability of ordinary schools to provide for pupils with special educational needs".

This is a critical time and the Government need to respond if we are to receive—as we thought that we would 11 years ago—the full value of the 1981 Act. I believe that there is common thinking on that throughout the House. If the Minister cannot respond fully today, I hope that in the next few months—certainly in this parliamentary year—we shall receive a response from the Government. I hope that there will be a strong move towards achieving those objectives.

11.34 am

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on raising this subject, and I agree with much of what she said. However, I did not agree with the emphasis she placed on lack of funding as a major cause of the problems.

Speaking as a disabled person and a spastic, I remind the House that when the subject first came to light in the late 1930s and during the war, it was suggested that brain injury meant that one was mentally retarded and should be locked away. Perhaps some of my political colleagues still believe that, but that was then considered to be the right answer; there were no statements of need.

For the first nine years of my life, although unable to walk properly, I survived in an inner-city school in Bristol as best I could. Even after an operation to correct that problem, I had to survive in school with a relatively severe disability to my hand which made mobility awkward—it still does at times. Therefore, I understand the problems.

The information and technology on, and understanding of, disability has changed since my young days, but I wonder whether attitudes have changed. I am not sure that they have. I am grateful that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) raised the subject of dyslexia and I am surprised that the hon. Member for Cambridge did not, although she may have mentioned the word in her speech.

I served on my local authority for a considerable time, and it flatly refused to recognise dyslexia as an illness until recently. Even in 1984, after I had been in this place for one year, I was approached by a parent who was convinced that her child was dyslexic. The education authorities had flatly refused to recognise that. We have to be careful about so-called experts; educational psychologists do not always know best. I accept the view that parents frequently know better.

In the case of the mother who came to see me, the so-called experts kept saying that the child merely had a learning problem that could be put right with extra attention in class. That was nonsensical bunkum and the solution did not work. The mother was convinced that something was wrong with her child, but could not identify what it was. She met experts in the subject of dyslexia who convinced her that that was the problem with her child. The family had an almighty row with the director of education and the experts. Finally, they agreed—I think to get me off their backs—to send the child to a dyslexic school, with the authority paying the fees. I wonder how many other kids in the same position, whose parents lacked the foresight and fortitude of that mother to approach a Member of Parliament, were left in chaos.

My local authority gives such children no special help. I think that the problem lies not in a lack of funds, but in the preconceived attitude of the experts, whose training at university as psychologists often teaches them not to recognise dyslexia. They are taught to consider the problem as a learning difficulty and, whatever anyone else says, that will remain their view. Such a perception is blinkered and tunnelled, and I am sure that many kids have suffered as a result.

I am not exactly sure about the Government's view on the subject, but they should direct every local authority to recognise immediately that dyslexia is an illness—a disability—which must be helped in a special way. If the Government continue to allow local authorities, for financial or other reasons, not to recognise that problem and to palm off parents by telling them that their child merely has a learning problem, the Government will have much to answer for.

I understood the intervention of my hon. Friend the Minister on the role of parents in delaying procedures. However, if it were not for the parent in my constituency—and, I am sure, many parents throughout the country—challenging the statements and comments of so-called experts in schools, many kids would not be receiving the special education that they do now. I appreciate why my hon. Friend intervened on the matter of statements being delayed by parents' tenacity, but we must not undervalue that tenacity.

Another aspect of special need that the hon. Member for Cambridge did not mention—neither has anyone else—is that of the gifted child. I have a grandson who may be specially gifted. The Act contains no provision for the

*[Mr. Terry Dicks]*

gifted child who, if left to push himself or herself along within the class, becomes frustrated. That frustration can lead to disruption in the class and learning difficulties.

Why are the needs of a gifted child, with all that that entails, not recognised as special? I cannot understand why the Act does not provide for those needs, or why people involved with special needs do not consider that aspect. I recently received a booklet on special needs that did not contain one word or one line about the gifted child, which I find amazing.

Whether we like it or not, gifted children are likely to be future captains of industry, senior civil servants or even, God forbid, politicians. If we do not recognise the special treatment and needs of such children and the help required by their parents—who may have fallen behind their children in intellectual terms—I do not know what will happen.

**Mr. Forth:** In case I do not manage to answer the point later, I shall try to deal with it now. I can reassure my hon. Friend that the important point that he makes is well understood at the highest level in my Department, and is carefully considered. However, we face the difficulty as to whether it would be right to place the children of whom my hon. Friend speaks into the category of those with special educational needs as we all understand them, and as we have referred to them in the debate, as learning difficulties or whether those children should be dealt with in a different way. While I take my hon. Friend's point—the matter is being studied—he may agree that it is arguable whether we should seek to deal with gifted children under the umbrella provisions that we have debated this morning or whether they would be better provided for in a different way.

**Mr. Dicks:** My hon. Friend's helpful remarks are much appreciated. I accept the dilemma faced by educational experts and members of the Department when placing children in categories. However, I would rather that gifted children were placed in the present category than pushed aside and forgotten because they do not fit into a category. Perhaps we should write into the Act a special clause stating that we also recognise the special needs—or whatever we choose to call them—of the gifted child. Many parents who are concerned about that matter, go to their education authority, where officials say that they have no responsibilities for the problem. They say that they do not need to take into account whether the children are bright, and can only place them in an ordinary classroom and hope that they fight through. Often they do. Often they help with the teaching. My eight-year-old grandson reads to younger children to help out the teacher. He says, "If you're not going to listen to me, I'll stop reading." He wants to do that. His teacher must be frustrated when there are 25 to 30 children in a class and she cannot give him the special help that he requires.

**Ms. Armstrong:** I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman says. He is making a powerful case for very good comprehensive education. I invite him to study the HMI report that was published a couple of weeks ago about the education of the very able, in which the point is made very powerfully that when a teacher is able to develop good, differentiated learning and to adapt the curriculum and topic work for the specific needs of individual children, the very able have been most effectively challenged and have made the most progress. The report also refers to the fact that that has enhanced the overall examination results of the school. Therefore, differentiated learning within the classroom works effectively for the very able as well as for other children.

**Mr. Dicks:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady; but to suggest that I am a supporter of comprehensive education is worse than to suggest that I am a supporter of the arts. Comprehensive education has done more harm to the youngsters of this country than any other system that I can possibly think of. If we still had grammar schools, some of these gifted kids—the top 3, 4 or 5 per cent. from working-class homes—would be in those schools and making real progress in an atmosphere that is not to be found in comprehensive schools. The quality of teaching is not to be found in those schools, either. That is the difference between Opposition Members and Conservative Members.

I believe that every child is special. Special help should be provided for disabled kids, but special help should be provided for bright kids, too. I do not believe in some airy-fairy comprehensive system where all the kids sit together and have to move forward at the same rate. Bright kids should be put on the fast track. Slightly retarded kids should get special help. The average kid, the one in the middle, should get help, too. It is this nonsensical comprehensive system which has ruined the lives of many kids. It is beyond the pale.

The problems faced by dyslexic and gifted children are very important, but they have only been touched on by Opposition Members, apart from the hon. Member for Caernarfon. There must be recognition of the needs of dyslexic children. I hope that my hon. Friend will send directives, if not something more powerful, to all local authorities telling them that they have no choice but to recognise dyslexia. I accept his comments about gifted children. I hope that very soon a report on education will be published that it will recognise that some children have special needs and that they must be catered for.

11.42 am

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice** (Lewisham, East): I am pleased to take part in this debate about one of the most important aspects of education. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) for raising the issue.

I want to deal specifically with the special educational needs of those with physical and mental disabilities. I accept the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge about young people with emotional and behavioural problems and also the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) about young adults who need special training—a point which I have raised on previous occasions in the House.

In all my years of teaching—I taught some of the most academically able, as well as those who needed very much more encouragement and support so that they could achieve their full potential—I became more and more convinced that we do those young people no great service because we very often reach them too late. My colleagues in the teaching profession will back me when I say that

they do not often have the opportunity to give those young people the help that they need because they are unable to reach them as early as they ought.

I want to deal, first, with some general thoughts on special educational needs, secondly, with an example of good practice in my constituency which I believe should be developed throughout the country and, thirdly, with a personal experience. The HMI-Audit Commission report, "Getting in on the Act" makes important recommendations about how we are failing both as educators and as legislators. I hope that the Minister will refer to some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge in her speech and will also deal with some of the points made by the report.

Children with special educational needs are not among the first to receive any spare funds that education authorities might have. They are few and far between, given the scant resources that the Government have passed on to local education authorities. It is essential that the work done with children with special educational needs should be closely monitored and evaluated. The teachers who work with children with special educational needs are dedicated professionals. They need resources and support to carry out their work and to develop it. They also need to be able to exchange ideas.

That support is not always available, except on a voluntary basis when teachers in their own time share their experiences and develop ideas. That evaluation must become part of the timetable of the school day so that any necessary changes and adjustments can be made to suit the needs of individual children. We often forget that children are individuals and have different personalities. They cannot be lumped together en masse. That is one reason why additional resources, in the shape of more teachers and learning assistance, are needed so that children with special educational needs can be helped in small groups.

In order to ensure that children receive the essential support that they need as soon as possible, we must reconsider how and when we statement them. That point was made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I agree with him. It is time that we looked at statementing children before they go to school. That brings me to my second point about good practice.

I am extremely lucky in representing a constituency which runs the Portage project. For those hon. Members who have not heard of it, I should explain that the name comes from the American city where it was first developed. It is a support and development system under which people work with children with special needs and with their families in their own homes. Portage is based in my constituency of Lewisham, East, but it is available to the whole borough. Teachers visit the families in their homes. They teach parents how to stimulate, motivate and encourage their children from as early an age as possible. That means babies as well as toddlers. Both physical and mental stimulation are important aspects of a child's development.

Some parents who become involved in the Portage project are very distraught. They wonder how they will be able to help their child, who may be suffering from several disabilities. The teachers—and, I should emphasise, the other parents—work together to support the new parents and to show what strides can be made, if action is taken early enough. I visited the project again last week. I cannot tell the House just how wonderful it was to see children between the ages of 12 months and five years running around together, playing with toys, reading, modelling and doing all the things that we hope all children between those ages can do. Mums and dads were exchanging the moans and groans as well as the happy times and the funny stories that children inevitably provide.

I do not want, however, to paint a wholly idyllic picture. Far from it. There was much relief that day at the Portage project. It had only recently been confirmed that it would be funded by Lewisham council. The project had been funded by a Government grant, but funding stopped at the end of the year. Time had run out. It was left to Lewisham council to pick up the tab and keep the project going. I am delighted that the council recognised the outstanding work that is being done by the project and chose to keep it going. However, it was a hard decision for the council to take, bearing in mind all the competing demands on its budget. Pre-school work is not a statutory requirement, so there is no obligation on the council to provide that service. It is a great weakness of the education system that no obligation is placed on local authorities and the Government to ensure that pre-school work is provided.

Councils are constantly being forced to make horrendous decisions between competing but excellent projects. Lewisham has made a point of doing all that it can to help children with special educational needs, and I am glad that it has, but if the Government were truly committed to helping all our children they would give local authorities sufficient resources to set up projects such as Portage everywhere. Standards would then be raised dramatically across the country.

I visited All Saints school, Blackheath, last week, where a number of children who have learning difficulties are integrated into the mainstream. It is a small, community-based school, with a wonderful atmosphere, a small, dedicated and professional staff and a head who believes that integration into the mainstream is essential not only for children with special educational needs but for all the children in the area. One of the reasons why it does so well is because, being a smaller school, it is able to direct resources to deal with specific problems. The head teacher was grateful for the support that she received from the local authority. The school had a true community spirit, and if we are serious about integration and supporting children with special educational needs we should encourage such schemes.

I want to speak on a personal note. I have a nephew, Christopher, who has Down's syndrome. He lives with his parents and younger brother in America. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge spoke of how articulate people managed to get resources more easily than those who were not. That is true of Christopher. He is lucky in two regards: first, his parents are articulate, able and willing to challenge the system and, secondly, he lives in an area where resources are available to help children with special educational needs. He received the physical and speech therapy that he needed to enhance his development. At the age of seven, his reading standards are the same as every other seven-year-old, he is beginning to become more articulate and conversational and he is doing all the things that we hoped for him.

I told my sister-in-law yesterday that I would be speaking in this debate. I asked, "What would you say as the mother of a child in that situation? What would you want to happen?" She said, "Tell them that you must

*[Mrs. Bridget Prentice]*

integrate into the mainstream and that you must have high aspirations for those children; otherwise you will constantly fail them."

There must be much more integration into mainstream schooling. We must ensure that we have dedicated professional staff, which means more resources for local authorities. We must ensure that all children are targeted as early as possible so that they can be developed as quickly as possible, because unless we do so at the earliest stages of their childhood development we shall lose them. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the Government will consider that in the next few years. If they do not, we shall undersell some of our most wonderful young people by not ensuring that they get the support and the opportunities that they deserve.

11.53 am

**Miss Emma Nicholson** (Torridge and Devon, West): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this important debate.

I want to put a slightly different gloss on the debate. The Government have received much criticism this morning. I know that the Minister will handle each point in a constructive and well-briefed manner. I have a long history of supporting the Minister in his various different duties and I shall not be dissatisfied with his response.

I want to offer perhaps a plurality of approach that moves away from many of the single answers that hon. Members have offered from personal experience. There is great inspiration in the work that is being carried out, and I want to deal with that. I want to offer the House the thought that humans have an infinite capacity for change: however late it is discovered that a child has special needs, the child can still move forward and alter. Human nature is such that we have the capacity for change throughout our lives. In Poland, where I was recently as patron of the Friends of The Polish Children—I am sorry that I do not speak the language and cannot identify it correctly in Polish—special needs children are children until the ends of their lives because, in their attitude, they are, perhaps, childlike or have childish qualities. The word "child" in this context is already recognised as a definition that can be helpful beyond the statutory age of being a child in our society—16 years. The human capacity for change is limitless and we should not take the attitude that unless a child is taken at a particular age or in a particular way there is no possibility for growth within the context of special needs education.

Perhaps the first difference that I wish to point out and argue is that in the past decade we have seen an enormous shift in the way in which we treat people with difficulties. We see it in health, particularly in mental health, where there has been a great shift out of institutionalisation and into the community. We see it in physical disability, for which a wide variety of options are now available to people. There have been all sorts of innovations—both legislative and practical—with Government grants being available, for example, to alter offices or factories to suit the special needs of an employee with a physical problem. We see it in our approach to genetic disorders, one of the worst of which is Tay-Sachs. The Tay-Sachs Society is foremost in its identification of the extraordinary difficulties that the Tay-Sachs child faces in its short and wretched life. Some positive things can be done for them.

I suggest, however, that under the Abortion Act 1967 and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 we have made changes in the make-up of our society that mean that we have fewer people with the gravest physical disorders or mental handicap. Those of us who have worked in or have travelled widely in the developing world, especially in countries where abortion is unavailable or is denied to women—Romania, for example—have seen a higher number of children than the western average with what we would define as special learning difficulties. If one looks more deeply, one finds people with the gravest of physical disorders—perhaps an IQ of 10—whose life can hardly be deemed to be a life by western standards.

In passing the Abortion Act and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, we have taken a clear step away from allowing the widest possible variety of human beings to be members of our society. I am not passing a moral judgment, but merely making the point that one way in which we have tackled the problem is by creating a society that has fewer people with the very gravest of physical and mental disorders. Some Members look shocked. They should look at other countries, where they will see the balance. They will remember what the United Kingdom used to be like in the 1940s and 1950s, with a great variety of physical and mental problems.

We have fewer people with major difficulties and are therefore able, perhaps, to devote a greater percentage of our attention and to offer better and more appropriate facilities to people with special learning difficulties and physical needs, whom we now define as having challenging behaviour, both through health and teaching. Perhaps the main thrust of the debate and of the wonderful opportunity that the Government have given the House and society to help people with special learning needs is consultation on how to achieve the best possible provision for people born with difficulties.

I deal now with the non-governmental, as well as the governmental, aspect of assistance. So far, the debate has centred almost entirely on Government provision, but I want to show that no single state provision can ever match the need. There are some children and some adults in our society for whom a non-governmental approach appears less threatening. They respond better to such an approach, or the speed with which niches of need can be identified and matched may be better within the framework of a voluntary organisation.

I am not suggesting for one moment that the state does not have a major role to play. I have been familiar with the Centre for Autism at Henley for 25 years. It operates under the Department of Health, and I am not suggesting that it should be taken over by a voluntary organisation. I am a governor of the Mary Hare grammar school for the deaf, which has the finest provision in the United Kingdom for children with profound hearing difficulties. Incidentally, the school began as a voluntary organisation and was taken into the mainstream of the state. It is a grammar school, which provides the best possible educational needs-matching for profoundly deaf children.

If there are no physical disabilities, behavioural disorders or difficulties are often marked by truancy. That word covers a multitude of reasons for absence from mainstream schools. We have talked today about the need

to integrate children into the mainstream from special schools. I remind the House that not all mainstream education is appropriate for special needs children. It would not be physically possible to replicate in a mainstream school what Mary Hare grammar school for the deaf in Newbury offers. One could spend all the money in the world, but one could not offer a profoundly deaf child the total learning environment that he needs and deserves and receives at Mary Hare grammar school merely by transplanting a portion of it to a mainstream school. I know how difficult autism is and what a tragedy it is for the parents and for the child. One cannot offer the necessary provision, which is made at Henley, merely by transporting some of the facilities into mainstream schools. I am arguing for a plurality of approach in recognition of the complexities of the human condition. There is no single solution.

However, if one has a child who can go into mainstream education, he or she may still find it very difficult to cope. In such circumstances, behavioural disorders may, and frequently do, result in truancy. Many children who truant —I apologise for that horrible use of the word, but it is the current phraseology—have a horror of authority. I draw the House's attention to a wonderful group of people called Cities in Schools which tries to get such children back into mainstream schooling. Special educational needs in America have already been mentioned today. The concept of Cities in Schools was born in the United States. The Cities in Schools group is a unique mixture; I have never come across a voluntary organisation precisely like it. It has federal funding, state funding, local and business input. It arose from the voluntary network and has pulled itself into its complex, interesting framework of funding which comes from diverse sources. It is carefully put together and is still a voluntary trust.

Cities in Schools set up special schools where they bring together parents, children and teachers and cross departmental boundaries. Its great success story is that in 25 years it has brought children back into mainstream schools. Its definition of success is when a child goes back to mainstream schooling and does not truant. I am proud and delighted that we have now founded a Cities in Schools group in the United Kingdom. It has been going for several years. Some centres are already funded and running, and children are beginning to succeed in them.

I do not believe that the Cities in Schools concept could possibly have worked if it had been a state initiative because, in the eyes of truanting children, it would have had an authoritarian stance. Cities in Schools has a long way to go. I am on the board and I was a founder member, and I know that it is bringing children back into mainstream schooling. It pulls in teachers, parents and social services and, often—alas—the police where crimes are involved. Cities in Schools is an example of a partnership involving the state, parents, the voluntary sector and other professionals outside education. I believe that it represents the way forward.

Another organisation I know well is the Child Psychotherapy Trust, which celebrates its fifth birthday on Tuesday 7 July. It is based at the Tavistock clinic in London, and I am sure that most hon. Members know a great deal about that wonderful clinic. The Child Psychotherapy Trust deals with troubled children whose problems have, sadly, often been induced by adults. The children may have suffered sexual abuse, bad parenting and difficult backgrounds. Most of the children whom I have met there do not have inborn difficulties—they have externally induced problems to which they have reacted adversely in educational terms.

Again, the trust was initially a voluntary body. It is working hard under the Department of Health and trying to link the children to the mainstream. I hope that the Department of Health will see its way to financing the training of the child psychotherapists who have an enormous input into the children's educational future.

Another organisation that deals with a harsh angle of life is the Thomas Coram Foundation, with which I am working at the moment. It is the oldest children's charity in Britain, dealing with people who have enormous difficulties with housing and being unable to stay in one place. Trying hard to bring such children into the mainstream of education is a full-time role.

At the moment, I am the foster parent of a child with special educational needs. As the child is a ward of court, the Official Solicitor makes an input. As a foster parent, I have become keenly aware of the parental role in defining the best possible answers at any given moment as the child grows and matures. The parent's role is large. Several hon. Members have mentioned that role.

It is true that many parents do not want their child to leave a special school. It is not necessarily because they believe that the child will not get exactly the same provision in mainstream education; it is because they are fearful and understandably protective and they are worried about allowing the child the broader scope. They fear that the child will get hurt. Parents do not feel merely that one cannot replicate a special school environment within mainstream schooling. It is not merely a question of saying that the state is not putting enough money into mainstream schooling. The parental embrace means that parents do not want the child to be hurt, and they are fearful of letting the child leave the special school to go into the mainstream world. The parents' role is crucial, but it is sometimes difficult to define and to understand.

More than eight Departments have an input into children's futures. How do we know that? The new declaration of the rights of the child, which arose from the International Year of the Child in 1979, calls on eight Departments to agree the provisions before the declaration can be endorsed internationally. We have not ratified the declaration, although ratification may come soon, because we want to do the work correctly and properly. With eight Departments, there is a crossing of boundaries all the time. I argue that the overlap of responsibilities is necessary and that moving towards a Ministry for children would be a regression and would narrow the perspective. I believe that the crossing of boundaries and the inter-departmental flow of knowledge and experience are essential. No single Department could possibly have the knowledge of how to deal with Tay-Sachs disease, with autism, with behavioural disorders resulting in truancy, with physical disfigurement and with mental handicap. That is impossible. The flow of information from all the experts is necessary. I argue for a plurality of approach because of the polarity of children's needs.

Who are the children with special educational needs? Why am I fearful when people say that statementing is too vague? I understand their worries because a vagueness of approach may mean backing out of meeting the need. One child whom I know well is a small child who will not grow. Her special needs teacher has to be with her to ensure that

*[Miss Emma Nicholson]*

she can open the door, because she cannot reach the handle, and to ensure that she can get to the cloakroom where she cannot get on to the lavatory or turn on the taps. She is as bright as a button; her IQ is as good as anyone's if not better. Her special needs teacher is different from one required by another child. Another child whom I know well is significantly and severely dyslexic. Let us recall that dyslexia is not yet a single, definable condition. It is important to realise that, rather like schizophrenia, it covers a multitude of as yet unquantified learning difficulties. The special need of a child with a severe mental handicap is to get to a special school by the fastest possible transport, if the special school is some distance away.

In my constituency, we have an above average number of children with special learning difficulties. The reason is that my constituency is an especially beautiful part of the world. I know many parents who have come into my constituency once their children have been defined as having special learning difficulties. They have left their previous jobs and have taken less well paid and less challenging jobs. The parents know that they will die eventually and they want their children to be integrated into the countryside. The county has almost double the national average of children with special learning difficulties.

I do not always support statementing. It is a hard label and parents tell me that their children are uncomfortable about it and that it can cause awkwardness in class. There are many ways in which to support and help the children to do the best that they can and to lead the most fulfilled and enjoyable of childhoods without statementing them.

One school in my constituency has taken a special lead in dyslexia. It is a fee-paying school which has made dyslexia its mainstream preoccupation. The children are not statemented; it is just a school which decided that there was a great modern need for such provision on which it would concentrate.

In Devon at large, there is below average statementing. I suggest to the Minister that we do not have below average care and nurturing of children with special educational needs. I think that we have well above average and fine provision for children with special educational needs.

There is no simple answer and we all have a learning curve to go through on special educational needs. There will be many more answers that we can dream are possible today as we learn more and more about the difficulties of children with special educational needs and with learning difficulties, and as we increasingly analyse, identify, quantify and are able to meet those needs. I am confident that the Government are fully committed to that task.

12.15 pm

**Ms. Liz Lynne** (Rochdale): I disagree with the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on one point. I do not believe that statementing should be got rid of; I believe that it should be strengthened and that money should be made available by the Government for that purpose.

This afternoon, thousands of special children will come home from schools that are failing them to parents who love them but who feel let down and left out by Government, by local authorities and by schools. Those children will come home knowing that Britain has not delivered what they and every child deserve.

Why are those children special? They are special because they need extra care and attention; they are special because they need individual help. Above all, they are special because they deserve the right that other children have—the right to realise their full potential.

The House must not misunderstand me. Most special schools for children with special needs provide a good service, and many mainstream schools are doing their best with limited resources to educate those children. The reality is, however, as every special needs parent knows, that the children are not being given the very best, which they deserve.

Last week's Audit Commission report revealed widespread problems in the way in which children with special needs are first identified and, secondly, provided for. Sadly, 10 years on, the words of the Warnock committee still have not reached those whom it addressed and the same is true of the recommendations in the Education Act 1981. They were both attempts to improve identification of difficulties and to provide suitable help, although I do not agree totally with every aspect of the Warnock report.

As Bob Chilton of the Audit Commission said last week, although the principles of the Act have

"proved robust, the procedures for implementing them have fallen into disrepair".

The 1981 Act required local authorities to identify children with special needs, to provide suitable teaching and help for those with greatest difficulties, to make a quick assessment of a child's needs, and to provide an easily understood statement of how those needs would be met and action to match the words. However, as the Audit Commission made clear, and as all those involved with special educational needs know, the reality is very different.

One in five children are estimated to have special educational needs at some point in their lives. Some children have temporary difficulties with learning while others have more serious needs or profound disabilities. For those who need statements, there is the agony and uncertainty of waiting. Statements rarely come in the recommended six months; the average time is 15 months and in some cases it takes even longer. The Government must ensure that the guidelines turn into a firm legal requirement. When statements do not arrive on time, parents must be able to get an assessment elsewhere and bill the local authority.

Statements must assess the actual needs of the children. Too often, they are just vague statements of intent. Too often, they dodge real commitments. Too often, they are led by the facilities that local authorities have available or can afford to provide. Even when a statement arrives, there can be a long delay. A friend of mine has a child with special educational needs—who, incidentally, is also a friend of mine. I talked to her on the phone this morning. David has received his statement, but it will probably take a whole year for that statement to be acted on. That is just not good enough.

Parents must be fully involved in the process. They must be properly consulted. They must know who is responsible for providing what, and they must be given a real choice in what happens to their children. When there was talk of special schools closing in Rochdale, the first the

parents heard about it was when they read the local newspaper. Parents contacted me and my predecessor, Sir Cyril Smith, asking why they had not been consulted and told what was to happen to their children instead of reading about it in the newspaper. They asked the local education authority to call a public meeting, but the LEA refused. We therefore called a meeting on their behalf and helped to set up the parents action committee in Rochdale, which is still going and does good work lobbying the council, exerting pressure and ensuring that parents are properly consulted, rather than lip service being paid to consultation. Often the experts say, "This is what should happen to your child." But the parents are the people who really need to be consulted. They deal with their children all the time, not just during school time.

It is time that parents of children with special needs had the same right as all other parents to a say in the schools to which their children go, whether mainstream or special schools. Although I believe that we should strive for integration, I also strongly believe that we shall never entirely get rid of the need for special schools. There will always be children who need special education in special schools—those with profound learning difficulties, in particular.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** I should like to correct one point that the hon. Lady made at the beginning of her speech. She said that she disagreed with me, but in fact it was never my intention to say that statements should be got rid of. I want to make that quite clear. What I said was that a disproportionate amount of local authority resource is spent on the statementing process and on identifying rather than on meeting needs. I hope that the hon. Lady will take that into account.

The hon. Lady then referred to the process of consultation——

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. The hon. Lady is starting to make a speech.

**Mrs. Campbell:** I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. In that case, I shall leave it at that.

**Ms. Lynne:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cambridge. I am sorry if I misinterpreted what she said. I am convinced that statementing needs to be improved and I am glad that she agrees with me on that.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** Do the hon. Members for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) and for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) agree that identification of the problem opens the gates to the creation of the appropriate resources? The hon. Member for Cambridge said that a "disproportionate" amount of resources was spent on identifying need, but that is perhaps not the appropriate word. Often one is lucky if one can identify clearly what is wrong, but if one can, one can then call upon the appropriate resources, people and materials. I therefore question that assertion, although I appreciate that it did not come directly from the hon. Member who has the Floor.

**Ms. Lynne:** I am glad that the hon. Lady recognises that it did not directly flow from my remarks. I agree that the identification of people with special needs is very necessary, but once that has been done, we need statementing—although not for all children—to ensure that those needs are met.

The 1981 Act needs revitalising. The revolution in education threatens the best of intentions. With schools increasingly competing on the basis of crude academic results and under the pressure of the market place, there is a real danger of discrimination against children with special needs, who need extra care and attention. They tend to do less well in league tables of static assessments, but they have the same rights as other children to be given the best opportunities to do their best. We are talking about children whose development and progress are ignored in crude measures of achievement. We are talking about special children who deserve better than to be thrown on to the mercy of the market.

It is vital that the control of special educational needs should remain with local education authorities, but it is also vital that some form of national strategic planning remains to ensure that those needs are met, and that the Government give far clearer guidelines to local authorities. It is also vital that, as the local management of schools develops, enough money is left in LEA budgets to provide for those children with special needs. There will be a need for far more resources, but there will also be a need for better monitoring and inspection and for parents to be given choices. In any decision that is taken about a child, parents must always be fully consulted. That is the main thrust of my argument. We shall then be able to watch special children grow up like other children who are given the best possible opportunities to realise their full potential.

12.25 pm

**Mr. John Bowis** (Battersea): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) with most of whose speech I wholly agree. I, too, raised my eyebrows at the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) that one of the solutions might be to prevent such children from being born in the first place. The debate is about how we can enable and help children in the world, rather than about using devices——

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** I did not say that. My hon. Friend has it the wrong way round. I was merely pointing out that an effect of the Abortion Act 1967 was that children with very significant physical and mental handicaps are no longer born in our society. That is a fact.

**Mr. Bowis:** It may be a fact, but it is not a line which I wish to pursue in the debate.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on her good fortune in securing the debate. Appropriately, she has chosen education as her subject and, within education, special educational needs and how we can enable children, young people and adults to get the best out of education throughout their lives. The hon. Lady did not go on to deal with adult education as I should have liked her to, because I feel that we owe it to older people, too, to give them access to the benefits of continuing education.

We have heard a number of personal testimonies from hon. Members who have experienced difficulties in their own lives or in the lives of their children or friends. That highlights the fact that very often special needs cannot be identified at birth. Sometimes special needs cannot be identified before a child goes to school; they may develop as a child grows up.

*[Mr. Bowis]*

In that regard, Dr. Beve Hornsby, whose school is in my constituency, has told me that sometimes not even the experts can identify dyslexia until a child reaches a certain age. Sadly, dyslexia is not always identifiable at primary school level. Sometimes it is ascertainable only at secondary level. That may be one reason why in some cases statementing may take longer than six months, beyond the 12 months which the Audit Commission has identified as the median period and up to three years, which is far too long. However, there may occasionally be reasons for such delays, apart from parental involvement.

The hon. Member for Cambridge has done us a service by moving her motion. However, she was perhaps a little unfair to the Government. We have moved a long way under the Government. The 1981 Act has brought great benefits. The Audit Commission states clearly that there have been major advances for children with special needs as a result of that Act. The Government have contributed to that progress through their circulars. The Government, through the noble Baroness Blatch, have financed a review into where we should go next. The hon. Member for Cambridge was right to refer to the problems, just as the Audit Commission referred to them. However, we are tackling them and I am certain that the Government will introduce measures to improve opportunities still further.

During the 1960s, children were almost automatically shut out of our society if they were identified as having a special need such as a learning difficulty or a special physical need. They were put into special schools and often into boarding schools. They were taken away from their family and friends and from the opportunity to mix with their own peer groups. They were taken away from the opportunities of the curriculum. That point is even more important today in respect of the national curriculum.

We have moved a long way through the 1981 Act and through Back-Bench measures, but there is still a long way to go. I believe that a little booklet by Micheline Mason entitled "Nothing Special" is required reading for hon. Members. In it, a child relates her opportunities as a result of attending a school where everything is right. She is in a wheelchair and cannot speak very clearly. She cannot go to the toilet without help. She is picked up by bus and she tells the story of her school day and how she receives help through the design of the school buildings and assistance from the teaching and support staff. She also receives help from her fellow pupils who sometimes recognise more easily than the adults what she is trying to say.

That booklet is based on good practice collected from around the country. It is not based on one school. It is what we should be aiming for in the next step. It concludes:

"True integration means more than ramps and induction loops. It means an acceptance . . . regardless of ability or needs."

That is what special needs education is all about. It is about giving opportunities to all our children, irrespective of the difficulties that they must overcome, to benefit from the opportunities that are available to other children in society.

The 1981 Act introduced five stages. Much of today's debate has been about the completion of those five stages under Warnock through to statementing and the provision of resources as a right to the child and to the school in which that child is being educated—be it a special school or an ordinary school. I am not sure whether "ordinary" or "special" are the best terms to use, but, as I represent the constituency in which the Young's brewery produces ordinary and special bitter, I will not quibble with those terms.

Most of our special needs children do not get near the five stages. Most of the special needs children in my schools, and I am sure in the schools of all hon. Members, are at stage two. The school and the parents have identified a problem and are seeking to overcome it without extra resources, the process of statementing and the multi-disciplinary support to which I referred in an earlier intervention. We must consider those people and provide them with particular support.

Circular 8/81 stated of children:

"A small percentage have severe or complex learning difficulties who will need extra funding."

Alas, it gave no formula for LEA funding of the extra help. It also suggested that the numbers would correspond to the numbers under the Education Act 1944. I believe that assessment techniques and the analysis of new problems such as dyslexia have progressed a long way since the 1944 Act. I reiterate that many special needs are apparent only after a certain time has elapsed.

Circular 183 gave a checklist of the developments that one should look for in a child—physical, motor, cognitive, language and social. Memory is not included in the list, but it is mentioned later. The circular also lists the resources that are needed. For example, I refer to the special equipment for the daily life of a child with physical, auditory or visual needs, special facilities for dealing with incontinence, facilities for administering drugs, special education equipment and other specialist resources, in particular speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, psychotherapy and so on. Of course, we must also consider the environment of a school and transport. All those matters cost money.

I have previously referred to a school in Surrey that has set out to get it right. That school, which was previously a secondary school, was adapted for all special needs. It had to create a special resource room, a physiotherapy room, a treatment room, a speech therapy room, two sets of adapted toilets and two laboratories on the ground floor. All entrances and exits were ramped. Internal ramps provided access to all rooms on the ground floor. It appointed two teachers with experience in teaching physically disabled pupils, and two part-time helpers. The health authority granted six hours of physiotherapy and six hours of speech therapy. Lifts had to be installed because the Caterpillar stair climber proved to be unpopular and unsafe for the children. There was great commitment and the school was accessible to all children.

That school was accessible not only to children with special needs but to children who had no special needs and who had parents with disabilities. It is necessary for parents to be able to go to a school to see its work, attend its functions and be full members of the school's community. We should bear that point in mind as we consider adapting school buildings.

Earlier this week, I visited a primary school in my constituency. I ask hon. Members to go to that school in east Battersea. In the sixth class, the final class, 27 out of 48 children have special needs; in the fifth class, it is 28 out of 43; in the fourth class, it is 36 out of 46; in the third class, it is 38 out of 54; in the second class, it is 31 out of 47; and in the first class, it is 35 out of 50. More than 60 per cent. of

pupils at that school have special needs, but only eight or 10 of them are statemented. There is extra funding for those eight or 10 pupils, apart from what the LEA is able to provide.

We are right to ask what guidance should be given to local education authorities on when extra resources are needed. That applies not only to the statemented child, unless we want a massive increase in statementing, which I do not think is the case. We must provide for the vast majority of special needs children who are not statemented but who need support. If we do not give that support, a school that is doing its best for its children will bring in the necessary teaching resources and in so doing will reduce the pupil:teacher ratio, which will mean fewer resources for other children. Therefore, the education of other children may suffer. In such a school, there is no prospect of raising external funds.

I warmly welcome grant-maintained status. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) has fallen out with her Front-Bench colleagues on that matter. Grant-maintained status is the way forward, but it would not be a starter for the schools that we are discussing. Funding must be examined. The school to which I refer is on the border with Lambeth, so several of its pupils come from Lambeth rather than Wandsworth.

I understand that no extra funds follow the pupils across the border from Lambeth to Wandsworth. So Wandsworth has to provide those extra resources. The school is willing to take pupils with special needs, but has to cater for children in two boroughs. Perhaps funding should include some sort of weighting to take into account recruitment so that money can follow the child according to its needs. We could also examine national funding, which has been referred to.

I am not certain that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is right when he says that funding for special needs should be ring-fenced. What are we ring fencing? Until the child is assessed on a continuing basis, we do not know what its needs are. At the beginning of the school year or the school decade, it does not have a clue what resources it will need. It will certainly need some resources, but it is better to take each child as an individual, measure its needs and the resources that it requires, such as adaptations, teaching resources and so on, and set a figure. Perhaps an independent assessment of the figure is needed. As in the system of mandatory student awards, it would then be possible to ask the Department for Education, or the Further Education Funding Council, if the child is in a sixth form or FE college, to consider a claim for top-up support for the school or college.

Other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall not go further into special needs funding. I welcome the broad principles of the forthcoming review of appeals, the speed of decision-making, and parental choice. Parental choice has rightly been referred to already. I hope that we shall continue to ensure that education and testing are flexible. As the hon. Member for Rochdale said, education should have high expectations of children, irrespective of their needs. It should not lower its expectations simply because a child has a special need.

I re-emphasise the points that were touched on by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington). He spoke about further education and the need to continue the excellent provision that is made thanks to the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. I reiterate that education is for life, through life and continuing through life—and that applies as much to a pupil, student or adult with special needs as to any child who enters the education system at nursery or infant level.

12.42 pm

**Mr. Stephen Byers** (Wallsend): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on her good fortune in succeeding in the ballot for the debate today. I commend her good judgment in selecting special educational needs as the topic for the debate.

All too often, special educational needs are seen to be on the margin of education provision, but about 1 million school children and students have a special educational need of one form or another. We have heard a great deal today about the Education Act 1981. It was a crucial piece of legislation which set the framework for provision as we know it today. However, many of us recognise that, in the light of experience, we need to examine carefully how the 1981 Act has operated and how we could perhaps provide a new framework for the 1990s to lead us into the next century.

As we look forward, there will obviously be criticism of the way in which the 1981 Act has operated and been implemented. We must not allow those criticisms to overshadow the good practice that exists in many parts of the country. I give the House just a few examples. Pre-school provision was touched on earlier. Social services departments, education departments and, often, the health authority come together to work out the specific needs of a child even before it reaches the age of statutory schooling.

Special needs school children have been integrated into mainstream schools. In 1985, there were just 26,800 children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. It is projected that that figure will be well over 100,000 in three years. Schools are trying hard to provide for children with special education needs.

On post-16 provision, colleges have opened their doors to young adults and adults with special educational needs and have made a positive contribution. Schools that have developed community use have made positive strides towards involving adults with such needs as part of that provision.

Those improvements have been valuable and important, but we must recognise that we are still failing a large number of our children with special educational needs. If we are serious about building success for the future we must recognise that failure. It would be all too easy to apportion blame, but there is no single culprit or reason for the failure. The Government and local education authorities have to accept their share of the responsibility. The joint report from Her Majesty's inspectorate and the Audit Commission, entitled, "Getting in on the Act", which has already been mentioned, clearly lays the blame at the door of both the Government and local education authorities. It is an excellent report and the press comments did not do it justice. They seemed to concentrate to a greater extent than was necessary on the failures of some local education authorities.

The report is an important contribution to the debate and my comments are based on it, but also on 12 years' experience of local government and on the past two years, which I spent as leader of the Council of Local Education

*[Mr. Stephen Byers]*

Authorities.

There are three principal reasons for the profound deficiencies in our provision for children with special educational needs. The first is due to weaknesses and flaws in the 1981 Act, which broke new ground and had to take people with it. As a result, there is some vagueness and it lacks clarity in certain important areas. It does not define special educational needs, and that has caused problems for parents and local education authorities. Some authorities have produced their own definition of special educational needs. I was interested to read a letter in a national newspaper the other day from the chief education officer for North Yorkshire county council, which outlined the council's steps to introduce a clear definition of special educational needs.

The lack of a definition can cause problems. Parents may not be happy to accept the definition used by their local education authority. A national definition of special educational needs is a matter of some importance.

Several hon. Members have referred to a time limit for making statements. It is true to say that if time drags on statements become—to use the words of the joint report—"virtually worthless". There has been discussion of a six-month time limit—I think that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) mentioned a statutory six-month limit. I urge caution. There can be a variety of reasons why a six-month deadline cannot be met; a child may be in hospital, or information may be required from other statutory agencies. The Minister mentioned the fact that parents may produce new information which may change the nature of a statement.

A statutory limit would cause great practical difficulties. Most people would find it acceptable if we established that, in normal circumstances, a statement should be issued within six months. If a local education authority cannot do that for some reason, it should inform the parents of the reasons for that failure and give them a clear date on which the statement will be made. That would be a practical solution to a real difficulty.

We must also look at the appeals system. We have already heard that local education authorities are judge and jury in cases that often arise from decisions that they have made. Justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done, and many parents feel aggrieved at decisions made in what is considered an in-house appeal system, even if they are made for all the right reasons.

I support the setting up of an independent tribunal. However, I urge that it should not be too bureaucratic or legalistic. I understand that it may be based on the industrial tribunal model, with a legally qualified chair and perhaps two wing members who have an interest in the subject. When industrial tribunals were first set up they were intended to be friendly and informal. The other day, I read a report of an industrial tribunal hearing in which a respondent was represented by a senior QC and the hearing lasted for eight days. I hope that we do not get into that position. We need a friendly appeals system that recognises the delicate and sensitive issues with which we are dealing. An independent appeals tribunal will be a positive step forward.

The second reason for our system's failure relates to the pressure on the education service. Since the introduction of the Education Reform Act 1988, our education system has been in a state of turmoil. Market forces have been introduced into education provision. The market is about profit and loss and about gainers and losers. All too often, the losers in the education marketplace are young people with special educational needs, who have become innocent victims of the Government's education policies.

The education service has been in a state of almost permanent revolution since 1938. A blizzard of circulars and guidance notes has descended on our schools—a curriculum initiative nearly every other day. As a result, teachers have not had time—understandably—to devote resources to children with special educational needs. They want to do so, but, because of the changes with which they have had to deal, they have not had an opportunity to meet those requirements.

The deficiencies in the 1981 Act and the changes since 1988 have been compounded by the third reason, which is a lack of resources. Some 1·5 billion a year is spent on children with special educational needs, but there has been a massive squeeze on local government, particularly in the past four or five years. As a result of local authorities having to comply with the Government's strict capping criteria, demand is now outstripping available resources. The dilemma for local councillors is stark. They can respond to parents' legitimate demands and meet their needs, but, in so doing, they will run the risk of having their spending capped and budgets reduced accordingly. Alternatively, they can deny those demands, comply with Government spending targets and, as a result, fail to fulfil their obligations to the people who elected them to office. The result is not just a capping of a local authority's spending but a capping of opportunities and proper provision for young people with special educational needs.

I received a letter that shows clearly the consequences of a local authority having to cope with a reduced budget. It comes from someone who has responsibility for special needs in a secondary school in a certain shire county council. She says that her authority:

"Because of the financial constraints . . . must trim a million pounds from the Special Education budget. The reality of this global sum for individual children is, for example, that a statemented child due to transfer to us in September, who currently has an NTA"—

non-teaching assistant—

"for 5 hours a week, has had the NTA time removed and will be de-statemented in October. At the child's Annual Review in March"—

it was strongly recommended—

"that both the Statement and the NTA help be continued . . . What this means, realistically, is that he will move from a medium-sized, very supportive primary, where he has generally to relate to 3 or 4 teachers per week and works within a clearly defined area of the school, with his NTA's assistance, to a comprehensive of over 1,300 children. Here, he will have to relate to, probably, 12 or 13 teachers in the course of a week and move over a widespread site."

That is the consequence of those budgetary limitations for this child with learning problems.

"Thus the authority is setting the child up for almost certain failure."

Such is the consequence of one authority having to comply with the Government's spending targets.

We understand that the problems of resources are likely to get worse because we are about to embark on the round of public expenditure considerations where the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—a true believer, in common with the Minister, in sound money and fiscal constraint

—will no doubt be looking at ways in which to reduce spending on education. Resources are crucial to delivering high-quality special education needs.

Such are the problems that we face now. However, we welcome the forthcoming consultation exercise on how special needs can be met in the future. It should address a number of issues. It should consider resources, but, specifically on the recommendation of the Audit Commission report, it should also consider giving incentives to LEAs to implement the 1981 Act. At the moment, the way in which local government resources are allocated by central Government works against the provision of services. Under the standard spending assessment system one is penalised if one provides services and rewarded if one fails to do so. I should welcome a move to a distribution of resources from central Government that funded authorities that provide services that their people need.

The local management of schools must also be addressed. I hope that we all support the idea of delegated budgets. It was Labour and Conservative LEAs that embarked upon them. They were using such budgets for a number of years before the Education Secretary hit on that idea in 1986 and claimed it as a wonderful one of his own. However, we do not like the rigid formula that applies to the allocation of those budgets. Budgets for special schools in particular need to be allocated on the basis of need; the formula must be made more flexible for other schools so that money can be allocated to meet the special needs of individual children.

We know that we are now passing through a period of league tables. I support Newcastle United football club, and that trend causes me a lot of difficulty for a variety of reasons. The raw data provided are misleading to parents, but they are also dangerous for those children with special education needs. We are beginning to see a rapid rise in the number of exclusions from schools as they try to remove —take off the books—those children who may jeopardise their league table place. We need a special means by which to judge how those schools treat children with special educational needs without penalising them with a league table that might be published.

The provision for post 16-year-olds is a matter of concern, as one or two hon. Members have already mentioned. I know that the chief executive of the Further Education Funding Council is keenly aware of the possible difficulties that the changeover may cause to children with special educational needs. There has been a constructive and useful meeting at officer level between the local authority associations and the Further Education Funding Council. I understand that earlier this week a circular was sent from the FEFC guaranteeing that it would continue provision, at least from April 1993 for one year, for those students already in the system. That is welcome.

Another subject for concern is inspection. At present, under the existing provisions, Her Majesty's inspectorate has an obligation to inspect how special educational needs are being met in mainstream schools. As I understand it, under the new system with Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, there will be no such obligation. The Government have a responsibility to ensure that such a provision is made and that the new chief inspector will inspect special educational needs and how they are being met in mainstream schools.

We are informed by the Government that the admission policies of grant-maintained schools will become a natural form of organisation for schools in the maintained sector. It may well become the natural form in Tory-controlled low spending local authorities, but I am sure that it will not become the norm in many parts of the country. It has enabled parents to register a massive vote of low confidence in low-spending Tory authorities, which is why they have opted out in large numbers. However, that has not happened in many parts of the country.

There is a responsibility for the Government to ensure that the admissions policies of schools that opt out—I know that the Government examine those policies when they are considering an application—should not rule out the entry of disruptive pupils. I particularly welcome the decision taken on Newent comprehensive school in north-west Gloucestershire. It adopted an admissions policy that tried to exclude potentially disruptive pupils and it was not accepted by the Minister. However, Langley Park school in south-east London had an admissions policy clearly stating that it would exclude disruptive pupils. When it submitted its application, the Minister's predecessor agreed, which must give us all cause for concern.

I welcome today's opportunity to discuss this all-important topic, which is all too often ignored. We need a clear and precise agenda for action so that parents know their rights, local education authorities know their duties and the Government know their responsibilities. That is one aspect of education on which we can build a consensus. Certainly, local education authorities, parents and schools want that consensus. I hope that the Government will respond positively and on behalf of children and adults with special educational needs. They deserve and rightly demand opportunities, and should be provided with them.

1.3 pm

**Mr. Richard Page** (Hertfordshire, South-West): I start by freely admitting that I am not a specialist in this subject. However, anyone who has visited special schools—as we all have as Members of Parliament—cannot fail to be moved by the love and dedication shown by those who work in them.

I have brochures from some of the special schools in my district, including Garston Manor school near Watford which looks after children with moderate learning difficulties, as does Colnbrook school in south Oxhey. Boxmoor school in Hemel Hempstead and the Falconer school at Bushey look after children with behavioural difficulties. However, I wish to draw the attention of the House to two lines in another brochure published by Breakspeare school. It states:

> "A new swimming and hydrotherapy pool is being built which will benefit all the children enormously, funds for which have been raised by the parent-staff association."

I mention that in particular because I have had a tiny bit to do with it. I was greatly impressed by the way in which everybody worked together to raise the money. It led to a great spirit of comradeship throughout the school and helped to weld the school into a very loving and caring unit.

I know that there has been talk about more money being needed, but I believe that the spirit within these schools is much more important than all the money that can be poured into them. If that pool had been provided by the state, I do not believe that it would have done half

*[Mr. Richard Page]*

as much for the school as the school, the governors, the teachers and the parents who raised the money have done for it. I commend them for their efforts.

I freely admit that I am no specialist in this subject, but mention has already been made in the debate of the difficulty of accurate statementing. That is not unique to education. My work in the Public Accounts Committee and recent reports on breast screening show that standards of assessment vary dramatically throughout the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) asked a parliamentary question about the percentage of pupils with special educational needs in maintained primary schools in every local education authority area in England. The figures show enormous variations. The figure is 2·16 per cent. in Cornwall, but only 0·12 per cent. in Northamptonshire. No one can convince me that there is so much more need for the statementing of children in Cornwall than in Northamptonshire. I therefore endorse the call for a standard method of assessing the way in which children are statemented. The method of assessment throughout the country would then be understood and would be regarded as fair and acceptable. It is wrong to have high levels of statementing in one area while it is considered unnecessary in others.

It is easy to identify the extremes of the spectrum. The handicapped child can easily be statemented, but difficulties arise with the children in the middle. We all have experience of parents complaining to us about the time taken to obtain statementing. The parents are worried, they do not know what is going to happen, and the time scales involved are unacceptable. In the case of Hertfordshire, statementing can take up to a year. Even longer periods have been referred to in the debate. That puts unacceptable pressure on parents.

Parents face another problem. They may not agree with the result when it is received. Then, parents have to bear the cost of obtaining expert assessments in order to challenge the statementing or the assessments made by the education authority. There should be a recognised appeals system.

The movement from special schools to ordinary schools leads to doubt and worry. That is not new. When we had the 11-plus, the theory was that if children did well in secondary school they moved up to the grammar school, but if they did less well there they returned to the secondary school. That never happened; children were not moved. There was a rigid dividing line and late developers did not have the opportunity to move up to the grammar school.

To some extent, the problem with special needs education is similar, but we must approach it with greater care. The Audit Commission study found that annually only 2 per cent. of pupils in the 85 special schools examined moved to ordinary schools. I should like the figure to be higher, but we must ensure that when children move from a special school into main line education there is proper protection to prevent them from falling back and being worse off than if they had stayed in a special school. We must target resources to ensure that such children are not lost in the hurly-burly of an ordinary school. Support must be identified to give parents confidence in allowing their children to move from schools where it is required.

I welcome the Government's fundamental review of the Education Act 1981, which can only offer encouragement that the process of assessment will be shorter. I have spoken of the period of anxiety that parents experience and of the need for a coherent appeals system so that parents do not have to get their own expert assessment before challenging a council. I am happy that the Government have listened to the concern that has been expressed.

I conclude by paying tribute to those who work in special schools. The determination with which they pursue their Members of Parliament to get the best for their charges and the love and dedication that they put into their work will be noted and, I hope, acknowledged whenever the opportunity arises.

1.8 pm

**Ms. Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): You, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I are making a habit of being present at the end of debates. I seem to go under the wire just before the guillotine comes down and the Front-Bench spokesmen stand up. Perhaps I shall make it three in a row shortly.

Like the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), I am not an expert in this subject. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on initiating the debate and many hon. Members on the erudite way in which they showed their expertise, care and concern about these extremely important issues.

A pluralistic approach is sometimes desirable to the complex and multidisciplinary subject of the education of children with special needs. One of the difficulties is the way in which the various responsibilities of local and national government combine. Children and adults who need special education sometimes fall between two or three stools—the Department for Education, the Department of Employment and local authorities. We must pick a careful way through to ensure the utmost co-ordination.

The motion states:

"this House considers that the opportunities for children and adults with special educational needs are being jeopardised by the fragmentation of education"—

about which much has been said—

"and the inadequate level of resources from central government."

I shall confine my remarks to two aspects of the problem. The first is funding, which some hon. Members have mentioned, but I want especially to shine a little light on a matter that has so far been mentioned only in passing. I refer to adults in further education and the way in which the changes in administration of further education as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 are beginning to have a detrimental impact.

When the Department for Education issued circular 11/90 on education for children with special needs, my local authority in Wirral noted:

"Lack of finance has prevented any substantial progress being made in raising staffing levels in special schools and units."

It continued:

"Current staffing levels in special schools and units fall far below those mentioned in the Circular."

Conservative Members have given examples of local education authorities apparently not fulfilling even their statutory duties. I suppose that in some instances it could be a problem of inefficiency, but I submit that the levels of funding are so critically low for those statutory duties that

local authorities are often struggling to come to terms even with their duties in law and are failing because they are trying to balance impossibly small budgets. That is certainly the case for my own local authority.

A very timely letter arrived yesterday. It is from a teacher at Wirral metropolitan college which, unfortunately, has just been subject to a cut of £1·2 million in its budget as a result of local authority financial strictures. I must point out that the cut was supported by the Conservative and Labour groups on the council—it was probably what I would describe as a Hobson's choice budget decision. We must bear that in mind as the background to the problem, but I am sure that the Minister is aware of what is happening.

The letter states:

"I have just been made redundant. Nothing unusual in that, I am one of several hundred part-timers at Wirral Metropolitan College who have been affected by the massive cut in the college budget.

The loss of my particular job however has far more fundamental implications for the future.

For the last two years I have been placing adults with learning disabilities into community education classes, providing support for them, their tutors and volunteers. The scheme was due to expand in September to include more people with physical disabilities and those suffering from mental health problems.

Although the college has for many years provided a great variety of courses for such adults (a large proportion of which have also been lost as a result of the cuts) this was the only programme which offered the possibility of true integration. The benefits to the students have been enormous in terms of their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Jeremy, who has Down's Syndrome, described his yoga course as marvellous and said it had really helped his confidence and his speech problem by helping him to relax.

John, also Down's Syndrome, loved every minute of his tap dancing class and found the tutor and the rest of the group wonderful. When asked if he wanted to do the same course next year the answer was 'yes please!' He won't now have that opportunity.

Jean, in a wheelchair, was looking forward to starting a course in September. Her face lit up when she realised that she would be with 'ordinary' people."

That will not now be on offer for her in September.

My constituent also says:

"Other students on the course have, in the main, been very welcoming and supportive. This has been a useful educative experience for those who may never have come across anyone with a disability before. The government is committed to care in the community, yet here is a scheme fulfilling the objectives of increasing self-esteem, self-reliance, self-confidence, personal choice and well-being and the achievement of individual potential, that is now being cut. If the college is not going to be able to fund such an initiative then is there a case for asking Social Services or the Health Department to take over at least part of the funding?"

I want to leave that question with the Minister.

Hon. Members may think that such a course is incredibly expensive. I spoke to Mrs. Gladden who wrote me the letter. It turns out that she was employed for six hours a week which was not an undue financial burden on any of the agencies involved. The benefits of what she did with her time for the people whom she managed to get out of special schools and to integrate into other courses were greater than the money she used. Mrs. Gladden had 25 students and she was employed for six hours a week.

I draw attention to the non-academic nature of some of the courses. We have talked rightly about education in primary and secondary schools and about further education. There is a case to be made for people with learning difficulties or with special educational needs to attend non-vocational courses which help to integrate them into the community and into what we might term —I do not like the term—"normal" society. It is the so-called "leisure" courses, such as tap dancing and yoga, which are the first to go when there is a funding crisis, and many such courses have already gone. We need to pay attention to the non-vocational area as well as to the more academic side, up to and including university.

I should be grateful if the Minister would consider my next point. If he cannot respond today, I hope that he will do so later. There is increasing disquiet about some of the transitional problems that further education colleges—my own is an especially bad example—are experiencing with the shift from local authority control to the Further Education Funding Council. The trend seems to be that funding is cut by local authorities which, realising that the colleges will not be under their control next year, are trying to minimise their budget contributions. There is an immediate problem. We require transitional funding so that we can stabilise the colleges as they move out of local authority control next year.

I do not want to take up the 20 minutes which, I am told, is allotted to such speeches. It is important that we pay attention to the non-vocational courses and to some of the areas that have not been mentioned in most speeches today, but which are equally important to the quality of life to many people who rely on such provision.

1.23 pm

**Ms. Hilary Armstrong** (Durham, North-West): We have had an interesting and important debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on coming high in the lottery. I congratulate her with some trepidation, given that the Methodist conference is being held this week and that it is debating its view on lotteries today. We have tried to remind the conference that the House uses the system often. I also congratulate my hon. Friend on choosing special needs as the subject for debate. There has been all too little debate in the House on it in recent years. That is one reason why hon. Members have raised so many questions about the age group and ability of those with special needs who seek an education that will allow them to realise their full potential. Many special needs issues have not been tackled today, and that is a sign of the breadth and importance of the subject.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge for introducing the subject so effectively and for giving the House a chance to debate it. I hope that we shall return to it soon after the summer recess and that, by then, Ministers will have had the opportunity to pursue more fully the consultation that we have been promised so that we can consider the decade that has elapsed since the passage of the Education Act 1981 and look forward—as my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Ms. Eagle) suggested —to an education system that will meet special needs effectively into the next century.

The debate is timely. We understand that the Secretary of State is preparing a White Paper, on the basis of which legislation will be drafted, and that a consultation paper is shortly to be issued on the procedures for issuing statements and the appeals system, to which many hon. Members referred. Moreover, I was told in a parliamentary answer earlier this week that the Secretary of State is

*[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]*

about to undertake a wide-ranging consultation exercise on special needs more generally. I hope that we will hear something from the Minister about that today.

We have marked the 10th anniversary of the 1981 Act, which revolutionised the education of children with special needs. The Act arose from the Warnock report, which was commissioned by the Labour Government. The measure came before us with support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. It established the important principle that education, at least until the age of 19, is a legal right for all children and that, as Baroness Warnock said in a recent debate,

"the purpose of education for all children, whatever their abilities, is to improve their understanding and enjoyment of the world and thus improve their chances of obtaining freedom, independence and an ability to make choices, thereby giving them the opportunity to lead a fulfilling and productive life."

I hope that, in any review, that basic aim of the 1981 Act will be retained. If we can begin to fulfil that aim, the standard of education for all our children will be raised significantly.

Hon. Members have talked about specific provisions of the Act as they relate to special needs and have said that there now appear to be serious deficiencies, not in the aims of that Act but in its implementation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) referred to adults. I do not intend to spend much time on that subject; it would take far too long for me to cover every aspect in which I was interested. None the less, the subject is important. When the 1981 Act was passed, the then Government gave commitments to the effect that their next education Act would specifically address the needs of adults post-16 and 19-plus. That commitment has not been fulfilled. I hope that the Minister will reassure us that attention will be paid to the needs of older young people and of adults with special needs. Many people feel anxious about the needs of those people. The children who were the first beneficiaries of the 1981 Act are now facing adulthood. It is important that what has been enabled in their development so far is not lost because we have not addressed their needs after they leave school.

A recent Audit Commission report attacks the failure of central Government to define more clearly what constitutes a special educational need. It attacks the lack of clarity about the respective duties of local education authorities and of schools. The report highlights the fact that those deficiencies lead to inconsistencies in practice between LEAs and even within LEAs.

Local education authorities have admitted that factors that have no bearing on the level of need of a child have been influential in the decision to issue statements. As other hon. Members have explained, the most significant factor was pressure brought to bear by parents. That is clearly not acceptable. The Audit Commission report demonstrates that statementing is a lottery, with parents feeling that the process often does not reveal anything new and that it is often used as a means to delay getting access to resources.

The aim of the 1981 Act was to involve parents in a partnership in the education of their children. That has clearly not been achieved to their satisfaction or, I submit, to hardly anyone else's, either.

Another of the aims of the 1981 Act was to integrate children into mainstream schools as far as possible. That aim has been implemented in an extremely inconsistent way with little or no guidance from central Government or examples of good practice. There are examples of very good practice, many of which come from pre-school areas.

I was interested in the example of good practice given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers). When recording the litany of failures, it is important to remember that there have been some incredible successes. I was much impressed when I visited schools and nurseries around the country. Indeed, I was pleased to visit a nursery in North Tyneside, the authority on which my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend used to serve. That nursery was educating with specialist help children who had profound hearing disabilities. It was amazing to see the confidence that other children were developing in signing. It was amazing also to see the ability of other children, despite their profound disability, to deal with other children and to begin the very important first steps in their learning in a way that was clearly going to set good learning patterns for the rest of their careers.

It is important to recognise the importance of good practice starting as early as possible. Perhaps the Government would like to review their commitment to nursery education. We cannot talk effectively about integrating children into the mainstream of schools unless we start that process effectively at the youngest possible age.

The Audit Commission report notes that the lack of movement of pupils from special schools to ordinary schools does not reflect parental preference. It recognises that integration needs to be backed up with appropriate resources—another issue on which hon. Members have touched. Many hon. Members have defended special schools. I do not believe that they need much defending, but many mainstream schools have opened up opportunities for children with special needs through integration in ways that we never dreamed were possible. It is important that we continue to push that process along, to hold up examples of good practice and to make sure that when parents and families want their children to be seen first and foremost as ordinary, everyday members of society, but need the special needs of their children to be addressed for that to happen, they have our support to enable that to occur in mainstream schooling.

There have been problems with the implementation of the 1981 Act and as a result of subsequent legislation, particularly the Education Reform Act 1988. The problems have been compounded by the Further and Higher Education Bill, schools legislation and the manner in which independent inspections are to be introduced. These pieces of legislation have had an impact on provision for pupils with special education needs. In many senses, those children are becoming the victims of the market ideology that underlies the legislation. The Audit Commission states:

"there is some conflict between the principles of the 1981 and 1988 Acts."

It is a matter of history that when the Education Reform Bill was introduced, only three-and-a-half lines of it were devoted to the education of children with special needs. It is to the credit of members of the Standing Committee that examined the Bill that they ensured that the legislation addressed the needs of children with special needs. However, there still remained incredible gaps and

problems. I am afraid that the history of education legislation since 1981 will demonstrate that the Government have considered the education of children with special needs only as an afterthought.

The aims of the 1981 Act have not been integrated into the principles of subsequent legislation. Much of that legislation has put the education of children with special needs into an impossible position, with local education authorities being between a rock and a hard place: on one side, they have clear responsibility for enhancing the educational development of children with special needs and, on the other, the pressure of reducing resources, with their role as providers and monitors of standards in education being severely undermined and attacked.

If the Government had started from the other end and considered the education of childen with special needs and the principles of the 1981 Act as their starting point, the ideological dogma which often inhabited Ministers' minds would have been much mellowed. As a consequence, education opportunities for all children would have been more possible and standards of education across the board would have risen. That would have meant that we would not have to face real problems in securing education opportunities for children with special needs.

One of the most serious consequences of the collision of such children with the reforms of the more recent legislation is the increase in the number of children who are suspended or excluded from school. I sought to raise the issue when the schools legislation was considered in Committee, but my attempt was met largely with derision. I trust that new Ministers will want to address the issue more seriously.

Now that we are the other side of an election, perhaps we can tackle the issues rather than bandy words about them. A recent Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte survey estimated that pupil exclusions jumped in just one year —1990-91—by a staggering 20 per cent. to 25,000. Recent reports from Birmingham suggest an even higher increase in 1991-92. The figures suggest a doubling of exclusions within one year.

The education of excluded children cannot await a lengthy review. They are out of school now. Many of them have not received any attention for at least the last term. Therefore, I ask the Minister to consider the issue urgently. We look forward to the publication of the national exclusions reporting system and the Secretary of State's review of exclusion procedure. I warn the Minister that we expect him to examine the reasons for such a sharp increase in the number of exclusions and to introduce measures to tackle the causes of such action.

I suspect that the causes of the increase will include a lack of resources for the local management of schools, which has forced some schools to make harsh decisions about priorities. In some areas, support-staff time has been cut drastically. That point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge in her opening remarks.

I wonder whether the imminence of the publication of unsophisticated statistics and league tables on the performance of pupils and schools may be a factor in discouraging schools from supporting children who may damage a school's reputation, given the crudeness of the league tables. The Government's rhetoric, which abuses all staff in the central services of local authorities as being bureaucratic, has served ill the proper evaluation and use of advisory staff, education psychologists and central support services.

Another problem that arises from the conflict between the aims of the 1981 and 1988 Acts is the increasing pressure on statements. Indeed, much has been said about that today. I welcome the commitment to wide consultation on changing the process of statementing. I welcome much of what the Government have already announced, but I have fears. In setting a statutory time limit on local authorities, the Government must take into account the fact that the health authorities take the longest time in the process.

It is critical that other aspects of the problems that are faced in educating a child with special needs are taken into account. There is a fear that too many resources are already bound up in the assessment and statement of need and that not enough are directed to the critically important response to that need. The Audit Commission states that most local education authorities in its sample fell far short of giving an adequate performance in responding to special needs.

It is important that the Government in considering their guidelines on defining when additional help should be available, should seek neither to increase massively the number of statements nor to be excessively restrictive and allow LEAs to respond only to complex, profound and severe difficulties. Again, several hon. Members have made that point. I hope that the Government will recognise it.

The Government should consider including in the guidelines on statements the advice that statements should tackle integration. Statements should assume integration and identify what is required for a child to be integrated in the mainstream. It should be assumed that a child will normally be educated in the mainstream. Justification should be given for segregating the child, if that is the decision.

Some hon. Members referred to the conflict of opted-out schools, and I should hate anyone to think that Opposition Front-Bench Members were avoiding that issue. According to the latest survey by the university of Leicester, one third of grant-maintained schools are already operating a selection system, using interviews and examination results. Their admission statements may not have conceded selection, but they are practising it. How will the Government monitor admissions procedures and the system of appeals against such procedures? Will the Government take grant-maintained schools into account when they consider appeals? The appeal system will give even fewer rights than the present appeal system for special needs, and that is something which the Government must not ignore. If there are no safeguards, the arbitrary admissions procedure is bound to lead to children who are less able because of learning difficulties not being selected. The market mechanism leaves such children vulnerable.

The Audit Commission report also refers to evidence that parents of children without special needs are resistant to children with learning difficulties—especially those with emotional and behavioural disturbances—being educated alongside their children. Their fears are understandable, but they should be unnecessary in a well-managed and adquately resourced system that is based on the notion that every child should reach his or her full potential.

Fragmentation of the system caused by the Education Reform Act 1988, in the name of choice, is restricting parental choice in practice and threatening the opportunities of the most vulnerable children. It is leading to schools choosing parents and pupils, rather than parents choosing schools.

*[Ms. Hilary Armstrong]*

There are problems because the Government embarked on sweeping changes without considering the principles of the 1981 Act. Two recent reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate show that, in schools that have paid attention to special educational needs as well as the needs of very able children, the quality of teaching for all children has been enhanced.

I hope that there will be a change in Government rhetoric from today. Dogma may serve Tory Secretaries of State well when they deal with the right-wing people at their backs, but it has been damaging to education. The Audit Commission report makes it clear that local education authorities have an important role. We look forward to the Government recognising that and spelling it out.

**Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith** (Chingford) *rose——*

**Ms. Armstrong:** I am sorry, but I am anxious to finish. We know that some of the changes in inspections are causing Ministers some concern, and we look to them to deal with those concerns in the White Paper. The fact that some schools will not be inspected until 1999 under the new Education (Schools) Act 1992, causes me some anxieties about how we can ensure that education opportunities for children with special needs are being considered and provided in those schools.

**Mr. Duncan-Smith:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Ms. Armstrong:** I am sorry, but I am about to finish. It is critical that we improve educational opportunities for children with special needs. Every hon. Member has urged that today. We have all accepted not just that the Government need to act, but it is critical that they do so. We look forward to hearing the Minister.

The improvement of educational opportunity for children with special needs is a key to improving educational opportunity for all children. If the Government start their review from that basis, we shall be able to enhance children's standard of attainment and ensure that we have an educational system that will take Britain into the next century with confidence.

1.49 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth):** It is easy for me to join other hon. Members in thanking the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) for bringing the subject to the House. The House has displayed a wide understanding and knowledge of the subject and hon. Members on both sides have demonstrated their knowledge and concerns. It also gives me an opportunity to put on the record the Government's current position and how we see the future, which is what so many hon. Members have asked about.

As a theme for my initial remarks I could take no better than the comment made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), who said, "Under this Government we have moved so far". I could not have said it better myself. May I correct the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), because it was in November 1973 that the then Secretary of State, my noble and right hon. Friend Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven—no less—who announced that she proposed to appoint a committee of inquiry. She subsequently appointed Lady Warnock to act as chairman. Therefore, the process was initiated under my right hon. and noble Friend. Morever, under her Government in 1981, the Act was passed. Without wishing to make a party point, but simply to set the record straight, may I point out that it is significant that that individual was responsible for initiating and then putting into effect the Act that we are debating today. That reflects the sense of what my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea said.

We must also acknowledge that, for example, in 1985 —only two years after the Act's implementation—only just over one in 10 pupils with statements of special educational needs were in ordinary schools. That figure is now nearer two out of every five, which shows a steady progress toward what many hon. Members have asked for —the process of integration. I have no doubt that integration has not gone far enough for most hon. Members who have participated in the debate, but I hope that the House will acknowledge that significant progress has been made. Some hon. Members may want integration where appropriate, but there must still be a role for special schools and many hon. Members have acknowledged that. Surely we would not want to sweep away or deny the superb work done by those schools throughout the country, which will always have an important part to play in dealing with children and young people who, with the best will in the world, are unsuitable for integration into mainstream schools at some stage.

I was intrigued by a contradication that arose in the speeches of Opposition Members. Perhaps they should have a quiet word together later to get their act together. The hon. Member for Cambridge used words such as crisis and said that the system was falling apart. Her remarks were at odds with those of her colleagues. I bear in mind the excellent speech made by the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers). It is so refreshing to see an hon. Member speaking almost without notes and using them in the traditional sense of a reminder rather than to be read. He and the hon. Member for Durham, North-West referred to incredible successes and praised the examples of good practice throughout the country. How can we have a system that is apparently in terminal crisis and falling apart, while hon. Members on both sides of the House found so many examples of what has been done in superb schools by dedicated teachers and others? I do not think that we can have it both ways. It will not surprise the House to learn that I err in favour of the view expressed by the hon. Members for Wallsend and for Durham, North-West.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** Our approach is not inconsistent. I am sure that the Minister is aware the local authority that I mentioned is Conservative controlled and has been starved of resources for many years. That may not be the case with the other local authorities to which my hon. Friends have referred.

**Mr. Forth:** I am delighted with that answer. Things are getting better and better. I shall give way frequently if the hon. Lady is confirming that, whether or not her authority is starved of resources—I have many figures that I could trade with her about that, but I doubt whether I will have the time—many other authorities are not starved of resources. That is common ground that we can occupy straight away.

The debate was also marked by a ritual whinge about resources. I have two things to say about that. One of them is mildly party political and some might even say it verges on the controversial, but I shall press on regardless if my hon. Friends will forgive me. I address this comment particularly to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne), but it applies more broadly. The Liberal Democrat party in particular fought the recent general election by making a virtue of committing itself to a specific increase in education resources. It took great pride in the fact that it would apply a tax, an hypothecated one no less, to pay for that. Some Opposition Members might have been tempted down that same road.

The Liberal Democrats lost the election very badly—their vote went down significantly. It is tempting to say in a debate such as this that everyone agrees that more resources must be given, that that is the only answer and that unless that happens it will be a disaster. That does not accord with the recent political facts as expressed at the general election. We would all do well to bear that in mind. Those facts had an effect quite apart from the constraints of the public expenditure round, which I freely acknowledge and to which reference has been made. I doubt whether those constraints would have operated any differently if the Liberal Democrats had been in power.

**Ms. Lynne:** I am sure that the Minister would acknowledge that in a survey the vast majority of the public said that they would like more resources to be directed into education.

**Mr. Forth:** The public always say such things in surveys, but when it matters—when we are talking about the governance of the country and rates of tax—they tend to draw back quietly into the secrecy of the ballot booth and say something rather different. That is the backcloth to the debate.

My second point is equally important. It has been implied throughout the debate, as it has been in so many other education debates, that there is a direct relationship between the quality of education or the provision of special educational needs and the level of expenditure. That is taken as read. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) argued eloquently that there is no such relationship and that it has never been established.

I would not argue that there is an inverse relationship, but some interesting figures can be cited. The LEAs with the highest percentage of statemented children include Wiltshire, Hampshire and Buckinghamshire. Those authorities appear relatively low in the league table of general educational expenditure per head. Conversely, two of the authorities with the lowest percentage of statemented children, Enfield and Salford—in different parts of the country—have among the highest general educational budgets and expenditure rates. We can see from those figures that there is no necessary link between moneys available to LEAs and the amount that they give to special education needs through statements.

**Ms. Armstrong:** The Minister acknowledged in his last comment that there was no logic to his argument. There has been much discussion today of the fact that if authorities and schools support children with special education needs who are not statemented, that will frequently mean that they can decide that they do not need to statement children. They will be able to ensure that they can meet the need, which may be short term, by additional support, without a statement. That would fulfil everyone's aspirations. The logic of the Minister's argument will not stand up.

**Mr. Forth:** I do not dissent from the substance of the hon. Lady's argument. I was trying to make a different point. I was using the only hard figures that we have on statementing in particular, not general resources.

A feature of today's debate has been that, although the report of the Audit Commission has been mentioned, it has rarely been quoted. I shall do so somewhat in extenso, as it contains some interesting facts. Paragraph 74 states:

"Funding for pupils with special needs but without a statement was a regular source of dispute between school and LEA. Over half of the head teachers interviewed claimed that they were inadequately funded to provide for such pupils"—

what a surprise—

"This view is weakened substantially by the fact that 60 per cent. of them"—

head teachers—

"were not aware of the resources they did get. This situation arises partly because LEAs have not been sufficiently clear about the amounts in schools' budgets which relate to special needs, and partly because head teachers have not seen it as a priority to find this out."

That is an interesting statement from the Audit Commission, as it gives the lie to some of the arguments that we have heard today.

Much play has been made of grant-maintained schools and the effect that they may have. Before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State approves any school's application for grant-maintained status, he must be satisfied that the arrangements that the school proposes for children with special education needs are satisfactory and a statement of the proposed provision for such pupils must be included in the application. Even if schools conduct ballots and receive parental approval, there is no question of their receiving approval for grant-maintained status if their provisions for pupils with special educational needs are less than acceptable in the fullest sense of the word.

The Audit Commission stated:

"There was no difference between the attitude of head teachers of the six grant-maintained schools visited and their counterparts in LEA-maintained schools . . . No LEA reported increased difficulty in setting up units for pupils with special needs (including learning difficulties) in ordinary schools, providing that they were able to agree on the funding arrangements with the school."

That applied equally to grant-maintained schools, some of which had units for pupils with special needs. I hope that that brief extract from the Audit Commission's report will lay to rest the canard, mentioned several times today, that there is something unacceptable about grant-maintained schools in the context of special needs provision.

We can have a debate about grant-maintained schools, their role and acceptability at another time. Opposition Members must be careful that they do not get left high and dry, beached as the tide moves in a different direction, as they have on so many issues. However, that is a matter for Opposition Members to decide for themselves, and I am sure that they will do so.

We are satisfied that it is right that parents should be given the opportunity to take the decision. Opposition Members have said in this debate that parents know best when it comes to providing for their children's special needs. We believe that parents also know best about more general educational needs. If we put it to the ballot, having

*[Mr. Forth]*

given them all the information on whether a school should become grant maintained, we believe that it is right to listen to those parents.

**Mr. Byers:** If the Minister is so sure that parents' views are of paramount importance, does he not further agree that if a parent were aggrieved because a place was not available at a grant-maintained school, he or she should have the facility—which I know that the Government are considering—of appealing to the independent tribunal that it is hoped to establish?

**Mr. Forth:** Is the hon. Gentleman referring to special needs, or more generally?

**Mr. Byers:** The debate is about special educational needs. If a parent who has a child with special educational needs applies to a grant-maintained school and is refused, no provision is made—apart from appealing to the school—for gaining admission. In those circumstances, would it not be appropriate for that parent to have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal?

**Mr. Forth:** We shall look at that question when we consider all the provisions that are to be made under our proposals to which now, in a timely fashion, I intend to turn.

I take this opportunity to put on record the Government's proposals. Through a quirk of fate, these matters were unveiled in another place before we had the chance to unveil them here. This debate, for which I thank the hon. Member for Cambridge, gives me the opportunity to do so. First, however, may I point out to the hon. Member for Wallsend that there are many aspects of grant-maintained school provision that require a new framework in which to operate. We are very conscious of that fact. It is one of the issues that will be addressed in the forthcoming White Paper and in the legislation that follows it. We shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point.

**Ms. Armstrong:** The Minister tempts me. He mentioned the White Paper. Shall we have it before the recess?

**Mr. Forth:** No. *[Interruption.]* All right. I shall be fairer than that to the hon. Lady, since she has been very kind to me today. We hope that the White Paper will come out either soon or shortly—*[Interruption.]*—or, since the hon. Lady tempts me further, in a few weeks. That is as far as I can go without getting into really big trouble.

For the benefit of those hon. Members who have participated in the debate, I shall set out what our proposals encompass, those on which we intend to consult, those that will be touched upon in the White Paper and those that we anticipate will be the subject of future legislation. There will be early consultation with local education authorities and others. We have decided that comprehensive provision must be made for regulating the time and the way in which authorities carry out the process, from initial notification to an authority that an assessment may be necessary to the issue of a final statement.

We shall consult widely on the content and form of the regulations that will be required to put this in place, particularly in relation to district health authorities and social services and their role in the process. We also acknowledge that there may be some cases where a shorter assessment process would be more appropriate than the prescribed one. We propose to implement that by amending existing statutory regulations that deal with assessments.

Although there is very much common ground, in that we all want to try to ensure that the present unacceptably long time scales for assessing these matters are dealt with, I share the doubts of those hon. Members who believe that a blanket six-month time scale would be unworkable. It may seem attractive, but I do not believe that it would work. What we envisage at this stage, subject to consultation, is the introduction of a more flexible series of time scales, depending on different types of assessment or provision of statements, or identification of need. We envisage a timetable, but we believe that it will have to be flexible in order to take account of the inevitable variations in this important and complex area. All hon. Members will find that there is a great deal of common ground there.

We have also considered what we should do to provide parents of statemented children with the statutory right to express a preference for the school that they wish their children to attend. That would be similar to the rights that parents already have under the Education Act 1980. We have concluded that it would be right to allow parents to express a preference for a particular special or ordinary school within the maintained sector, following the recommendations of the Audit Commission. The authority's decision on placement will need to take account of the assessment of the child's needs, consultation with those schools that would or might be able to make a special educational provision, the needs of other pupils and the wise or correct use of resources. That will be an important step forward in trying to give parents a much more effective say in the process. We have given that right to children who do not require special education, and we believe it right to do the same for those who come within the compass of special educational needs.

We acknowledge that there will be cases where parents and authorities will find it difficult to resolve their differences. We want to try to ensure that parents who are unhappy with what has been determined can secure quicker redresss than the present arrangements allow, which is certainly far too long. Consistent with the parents charter and the spirit of it, we want to see how an appeal system can become more independent and whether there is scope for making a single appeal body to replace the present two-stage process.

We announced on Monday that we will introduce proposals to establish a new independent tribunal to hear appeals from parents of children with special educational needs. We think that that is the best way forward. We wanted to consider in detail how it might make the procedure quicker, give people more confidence in it and make it more independent. We envisage—this is subject to consultation with interested bodies—that the tribunal will be established under a president and will sit as a number of tribunals having the same jurisdiction under regional chairmen. Membership may comprise a legally qualified chairman with two other members, one of whom would have to have expertise in special educational needs and the other of whom might have experience in local government. That is the flavour of the approach that we think would be most appropriate at this stage.

The tribunal would determine appeals against a local authority's refusal to assess or reassess a child, against an

authority's decision not to determine provision for a child in a statement and against the special educational provision specified in a statement. It would also determine a new specific right of appeal against the school named in the statement and a new right against an authority's decision to amend or cease to maintain a statement.

That would be a comprehensive approach to the subject, which, since the 1981 Act, has proved more unsatisfactory as time has gone on.

**Mr. Worthington:** Labour Members agree that there should be a right to appeal, but the Minister is fond of introducing rights of appeal against local authority actions. I asked earlier for a Government guarantee of a suitable training place for everybody, including those with special needs. Will the Minister be robust, forthright and all the qualities that he gives himself by agreeing that it would be logical for the right of appeal to extend to a suitable training place?

**Mr. Forth:** Many of the points that the hon. Gentleman made should be addressed to my colleagues at the Scottish Office and the Department of Employment. I shall ensure that they are made aware of the point that he made in the debate.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): And the Welsh Office.

**Mr. Forth:** The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) did not mention the Welsh Office, but if the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) wants me to include the Welsh Office I shall do so. I shall ensure that those matters are brought to my hon. Friends' attention.

I do not want to get distracted; it would be wrong of me to do so. Other hon. Members want to speak briefly. It is not my intention to prolong my remarks any further.

**Mr. Wigley:** In the context of the White Paper and discussion of it, will provision be made for the circumstances of Wales? Changes in local government may lead to smaller education authorities and uncertainty over what is the strategic authority for special education.

**Mr. Forth:** That is an important point. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall maintain close contact with our colleagues in the Welsh Office to ensure that that dimension is fully taken into account. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will be able to read the White Paper and to make representations either directly to us or through my colleagues in the Welsh Office to ensure that those factors are taken into account. It is important that we all move together on this front and make proper provision for school children and those who have left school.

In my brief speech I have tried to reply to the main points raised during the debate. I regret that I have been unable to deal specifically with some issues that have been raised by my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members, but I hope that I have reassured the House that there is a lot of common ground between us and that we have together identified the shortcomings and difficulties which have arisen since 1981. My Department was already working on the problem, and the Audit Commission has spurred us on to outline our proposals as quickly as possible.

The debate is timely because a White Paper will be issued shortly. I hope that we shall have an opportunity to legislate during this parliamentary year. We hope to establish a consensus and to achieve the greatest possible agreement in order to identify the best ways to serve, help and support the children who deserve every support and help.

In that spirit, I thank the hon. Member for Cambridge for bringing such an important subject before the House, and I also thank everyone who has participated. The Government will consider carefully all the issues that have been raised and if I have not replied to any specific matters, I shall do so as soon as possible.

I am very encouraged by what has been said today and I regard many of the comments as broad support for what we are doing. I hope that the House has been encouraged by what I have said and that we can all work together to achieve our common aim.

2.16 pm

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am sad to have missed one or two speeches in the debate as I was attending a meeting elsewhere in the House, but I was present at the beginning to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) introduce the debate with a particularly authoritative speech about education and statementing. She said much of what the Government and all involved in education need to hear.

I am tempted to take up some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) in her very thoughtful contribution. She referred especially to the education of children with profound learning disabilities. I have been interested to see the way in which my own education authority of South Glamorgan has recently been working to identify children who have hearing problems which are not acute but which cause them considerable difficulties in the early stages of their education. The authority offers help in the classroom at an early stage when it is greatly needed.

I shall concentrate on the problems experienced after the age of 16 and on problems for adults with learning difficulties—a topic on which the Minister would not even have touched but for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) towards the end of the Minister's remarks. We need to change dramatically the way in which we consider people with learning difficulties or adults with a mental handicap. The International Year of Disabled People certainly succeeded in changing the view of physically disabled people who continue to make great contributions to the creative arts, sport, research and social work. Their contributions have been recognised. I am not suggesting that we should be complacent, but the way in which they are regarded has changed. However, we must recognise that nothing has changed for people with mental handicap—we are still in the dark ages.

I give three specific examples to illustrate the need for action. Some years ago I took a group of young people to Stuttgart as I have done several times. We took youngsters who had been involved in environmental work in the summer. We discussed whether two severely subnormal girls should be part of the group. We decided that they should because they had been part of the group in the camp. What surprised me was the change wrought by including them in the visit. First, their inclusion changed their view of themselves because they were being recognised by us and became more confident. The second

*[Mr. Alun Michael]*

change was the way in which their families regarded them. They were seen for the first time as people in their own right who were worthy of recognition. There was a dramatic shift, which is important. That underlines the need for educational and training opportunities for young people beyond the age of 16.

There are often excellent standards in schools. There is integration in St. Cyres comprehensive school in Penarth and separate education in the Rhondda special school which I visited last Monday. In both, the standard of care is excellent. I must tell the Minister in view of his remarks that the success of both schools is a miracle of commitment by teachers and by communities who care, and it illustrates the priority given by far-sighted councillors. However, jobs at the schools are rapidly being made impossible by the Government and are now at risk. I ask the Minister to question his response and his apparent complacency on the matter of resources for local education authorities and for schools. I referred to the positive side in both schools. The position is not the same for opportunity past the age of 16. If the post-16 position is adequate at first, it deteriorates rapidly as the young person gets older.

My second example is also positive. I have the honour to chair the committee of the special computer workshop at coleg Glan Hafren. It is an honour because of the friendship I have received from the students there. It is also an honour to be associated with the creativity that the students show as a result of their opportunities in the computer workshop. In my office in the House I have a brilliant computer graphic given to me by one of the students, Andrew Reed, of which anyone would be proud.

The development of talents in the youngsters in the workshop is an eye opener. I pay tribute to the dedication of the staff, the leadership of Mr. Chris Jones, the enthusiastic support of the officers and members of South Glamorgan, and the humanity of the principal and governors of the college. The magic ingredient in the workshop, however, is the talent of the students themselves which is being unlocked and allowed to flower in the positive environment there.

For so many young adults with learning difficulties, that opportunity simply does not exist. Where do the students go afterwards? The Government need to take an initiative on employment and to change the image of these people. I talked to people in one large Marks and Spencer store. The company is positive in relation to provision of training places for young people, but says that the difficulty is the public's perception of adults with learning difficulties in public areas of the store. Like many other organisations, including HTV and Cardiff city council, the company has been helpful with placements. South Glamorgan county council wanted to create a number of specific training posts to get youngsters who come off courses into a job. Once recognised and in a job, such youngsters can move forward and be accepted in the working environment, and their talents can be developed. The individual can, above all, have a real job and can take a proper place in society. The will to help is there, but the lack of resources for local government to do the job is a major problem.

There is a need for training and jobs at every level. My third example is Track 2000 in Splott in my constituency. It is an excellent project which was set up with the help of local authorities. Using trainees, an old building was refurbished, where the project recycles white goods and furniture. The trainees are adults with a mental handicap. The recycled goods go mainly to homeless people who are being rehoused or to those experiencing extreme poverty. People are often referred to the project by the Department of Social Security as well as by social workers.

Changes in Government policy on training—an annual event over the past decade or more—led to a company taking over the project and the trainees and the community continued to benefit. I was called in a few months later, however, and found that there was a problem. The company had had to withdraw because the money was not there in the training programme to make its position viable. I asked, "How come you are still here?" The facts of the case were as follows. The trainers were on the dole and still coming to work in a voluntary capacity; the trainees were no longer receiving a training allowance but were still coming in; the customers were still being referred there by the Department of Social Security; and adults with learning difficulties were still being sent along by social workers because there was nowhere else for them to go.

Agencies and councillors got together to try to rescue the project. To be fair to the managing director of the South Glamorgan TEC, he recognised the problem and said that he would do what he could to help. After a gap of a few months, during which we succeeded in making progress towards the registration of a charity to run the project, the TEC came forward with a contract.

Then came the final irony. Many adults with learning difficulties who would benefit—and some who are going in voluntarily now—cannot be trainees under the contract because the nature of their benefit excludes them from registering as available for work and they are therefore not eligible for a training place. That is outrageous.

Those who most need help are excluded from training places. The talents of adults with learning difficulties are cramped and hidden. Our society is excluding from the community of work many who could make a positive contribution to it. That is a sad comment on the state of our society after a decade and more of Conservative rule.

Humanity and common sense demand from the Government, first, that they accept and recognise the need for education, training and jobs for adults with learning difficulties or mental handicap and, secondly, that they make a major initiative to change society's view of such young people and adults. The Government must transform the place in society of adults and young adults, as well as children of school age, with learning difficulties. If they fail to do that, our society will be the poorer and it will be a new and continuing indictment of the nature of our society in the late 20th century.

2.26 pm

**Mr. Piers Merchant** (Beckenham): If the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) was lucky enough to draw the lucky straw—on which I congratulate her—I seem to have drawn the short straw. Not for me is the magical allocation of 20 minutes referred to earlier in the debate. I shall make use of the remaining few minutes to draw attention to concerns expressed by experts who work in special educational needs in Bromley LEA, which I stress

has an excellent record in this matter, having assessed some 1,100 special needs cases and with another 500 in the pipeline.

The published January 1991 figures show that, among London boroughs, Bromley leads the field for the number of primary school age children who have had statements. The experts are concerned at the impact on school curriculum assessments of special educational needs units. Curriculum tests are bound to have an impact on schools with such units. The majority of the population might not appreciate that fact and might conclude that a school fell low in the league table, with the result that it would develop a bad reputation.

The answer to the problem is to find some means of distinguishing between the results achieved by children who have not had a statement and the results of children who have. I do not believe that that would be discriminatory because, in a sense, special needs children are already put in a particular category by virtue of having received a statement. I fully welcome their inclusion in ordinary schools and that has been welcomed by parents, pupils and the experts in Bromley. However, it would be helpful for the reputation of those schools and for the furtherance of those units—one of which has 50 pupils in a school of 300 —if there were some special consideration of the way in which the results are published so that the reputation of schools is not affected.

I welcome the comments made by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools about the importance that should be attached to parental rights. After all, that is now a major plank in educational policy —although that is not always the case—and it is right that it should be extended.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.*

# Orders of the Day

## CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY SEA BILL *[LORDS]*

*Order for Second Reading read.*

*Read a Second time.*

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

*Committee on Friday 10 July.*

## EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

*Order for Second Reading read.*

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 July.*

## FINANCE BILL

*Ordered,*

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House as to the intervals between stages of Bills brought in upon Ways and Means Resolutions, more than one stage of the Finance Bill may be taken at any sitting of the House.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Monday 13th July, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on any Motions in the name of Sir Marcus Fox on behalf of the Committee of Selection concerning Select Committees related to government departments not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been entered upon; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motions which she may have selected and which may then be moved; notwithstanding the practice of the House, each such Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion; and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

## SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That—

(1) this House do meet on Thursday 16th July at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock the Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit Questions to be asked which are in her opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangements of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock the Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question, provided that this House shall not adjourn until the Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

## Northolt Industrial Estate

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

3.32 pm

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): The decision by the then Labour council of the London borough of Ealing in 1988 to grant permission to build a mosque and 22 town houses on Northolt's only industrial estate was based on a false premise and ignored the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the residents and industrialists.

In 1980, a Muslim sect known as the Dawoodi Bohra —a group of Muslims—bought a former Jewish boys' club in the Hanwell district of Ealing. Although the premises were to be used only for educational and social purposes, the sect soon started to hold large religious meetings on their land, which was surrounded by privately owned, semi-detached houses. The local people complained that there was amplified chanting and that the sect was using the area freely as a rubbish tip and causing numerous car parking difficulties. That led to the local authority closing down the premises under the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

The local elections in May 1986 returned a Labour majority on Ealing council. The then leader, Councillor Turner, and other councillors were urged to find an alternative site for the Dawoodi Bohra sect, even though very few of the sect's members were Ealing residents and scarcely one of them lived in Northolt.

A site was selected which happened to lie in the council leader's ward. That industrial site, known as the Sadia site, was positioned at the only entrance to Northolt's sole industrial estate. The Sadia site had been vacant for several years, but only four days after it was purchased by the Mowlem group of builders for immediate construction of small building units—and the provision of jobs—the then council purchased the land for twice the price paid by Mowlem.

On 10 October 1986, Ealing council acquired the Sadia site for £1·4 million. The reason given was that it was needed for council purposes. In May 1987, Ealing council advised that it had bought the land on behalf of the Dawoodi Bohra because it was alleged that religious sects were unable to find the money. I am indebted to the Northolt village residents association and its chairman, Mr. Bernard Furzer, the former chairman, Councillor Fred Richards, and others for their research.

Ealing council said that it was anxious to obtain the land in Hanwell which the Muslim group owned and therefore, once the necessary planning permission had been granted for the Sadia site in Northolt, the exchange of properties could be made between the council and the Dawoodi Bohra community. The Hanwell site, which, by March 1988, included two of the surrounding residential houses, was purchased by Ealing council for the Dawoodi Bohra community for £900,000. There was no agreed planning permission for that site. In return, the Dawoodi Bohra community purchased the Sadia site for £1·425 million, which meant that the Muslim sect had obtained a much larger industrial site by handing over about £500,000 for a 3·1 acre site, according to researches by the residents of Northolt.

Although Ealing council had used ratepayers' money to buy the site and held on to it for 18 months, when the council sold it to the Dawoodi Bohra community, no increase to allow for inflation was added to the original purchase price. Ealing's ratepayers therefore subsidised the purchase of the land, without the benefit of any interest being charged, for one and a half years. That was when property prices in the London area, particularly in west London, were booming. In short, the Hanwell property was valued in 1988 when purchased by Ealing council for £900,000. It has proved to be a white elephant, as the land cannot be used by the council because it infringes back garden development regulations that have been brought in by the present Ealing council. That could represent another considerable loss of cash to Ealing residents, and it is rather typical of the loony actions of the former Labour council in Ealing between 1986 and 1990.

Early in 1987, following Ealing's purchase of the land for council purposes, thousands of residents voiced their protests to Ealing council against the proposal to build a mosque and a Muslim housing estate at the entrance to Northolt's only industrial estate. The industrial estate is served by one road for all industrial units there, and that is linked to the A40 trunk road.

I shall briefly record my action in the matter. First, the Dawoodi Bohra community leaders approached me in January 1987 and said that they would like to build on the site. I advised them that they would be making a serious mistake and should not go ahead. Secondly, in 1987 I chaired a public meeting, at which the idea was discussed with the three local Labour councillors present. Hundreds of people attended the meeting, which unanimously opposed the development proposal. Thirdly, a public petition went to Ealing council via myself, containing thousands of signatures of those opposed to the proposed development. Similarly, thousands of letters went direct and via myself to Ealing council opposing the development.

Fourthly, under my chairmanship there was a joint meeting of residents and the Dawoodi Bohra community at which local residents' leaders pressed the Dawoodi Bohra community not to go ahead with its proposed development. Fifthly, I held a second public meeting, again attended by hundreds of people, which unanimously opposed the proposed development. Sixthly, my many letters to the Dawoodi Bohra community asking them to desist from going ahead were not answered. Seventhly, in June 1987 a third public meeting was held which leaders of the Dawoodi Bohra community attended. I begged them not to go ahead with the project because it was not acceptable in even the smallest way to local residents. Eighthly, the then loony Labour council pressed ahead throughout with support for the proposal and ignored all objections. Indeed, it did not answer them.

Ninthly, preliminary planning permission was given at Greenford hall by the area planning committee in 1987. Hundreds of people demonstrated at the meeting. They were held back by police and Alsatian dogs. That does not seem a happy way of granting any local planning permission. It represented a serious misreading of the public mood. Tenthly, the planning permission was ratified by the then Labour council. Eleventhly, a Conservative minority councillor's attempt to throw out the planning permission decision was defeated by the Labour majority.

The House will see that I took the view that the proposal would not gain acceptance in the local community and should not be proceeded with. I emphasised throughout and emphasise again today that

freedom to worship, whatever a person's religion, is not in question. The problem is and has always been that to build the facility—if I might call it that—and the 22 houses on Northolt's only industrial estate would do serious damage to race relations and public morale in Northolt, where there is already high unemployment. It should not be proceeded with for that reason.

The residents complained that a mosque on the Sadia site would slowly but surely erode the industrial base of Northolt, on which many residents depend for their livelihood. They took the view that the arrival of possibly thousands of worshippers at the mosque in their cars could be misread by local people and others and could damage local industrialists' pursuit of their activities.

The owners of the factories might conclude that it was not economic to continue trading under such conditions. Their departure from the estate would only worsen the employment position for Northolt people. I repeat that Northolt has the sad distinction of having too high a number of unemployed people—more than we should like. Even though hundreds and thousands of my constituents implored the then Labour council to refuse planning permission, their pleas were ignored and were not even discussed. Detailed planning permission was granted at the end of 1988 by the council.

The greatest sadness in the series of events is that, but for the administrative incompetence of the Labour council when it purchased the Sadia site in October 1986, the whole sorry state of affairs might have stopped at that date. In answer to a question put by the Northolt village residents association, the officers of the then council leader categorically rejected any suggestion that there was a restrictive covenant on the Sadia site. The residents had the impression that the council did not even investigate whether there was such a covenant. The statement had to be accepted at face value because at that time it was not possible for an outside party to make a search of the title deeds.

Only after detailed planning permission had been granted in 1988 for the Dawoodi Bohra community to go ahead and build its mosque and town houses were local residents able to discover that a restrictive covenant existed. It had been taken out in 1937. It strictly precluded on all those areas of land including the one in question any use other than for buildings

"for factory, or warehouse or workshop or offices."

The Dawoodi Bohra community refused to accept the validity of the covenant and local industrialists took the matter to the High Court. There they were told that the covenant was valid. Their views on its validity were upheld. The judge said:

"one could not help falling over the covenant".

Yet not one person in Ealing town hall in 1986 had thought to discover whether a covenant or casement had been placed on the Sadia site. Although the High Court upheld the covenant, it refused to allow an injunction to prevent the building work from taking place.

If the mosque is completed, industrialists could constantly be seeking damages for infringement to their businesses from the Dawoodi Bohra community. It might only be a question of time, and of how long a factory owner could continue to claim damages from a neighbour, before deciding to sell up and move the business to a site where operations would be easier.

My constituents were totally ignored by the former loony Labour Ealing council. As ratepayers, they have had to pay for the very thing that they opposed and still oppose—in planning terms. The very protection under law which would have assisted them to ensure continued employment on the Sadia site was denied them by the unwitting incompetence—that is what local residents justifiably call it—of people who purported to represent them at Ealing town hall.

In January 1991, at the instigation of Northolt village residents association, the Department of the Environment required the present Ealing council to submit a full report on the granting of this planning permission to the Secretary of State. Although requests have been made for that report to be made available to the residents association and to others in the local community, it has not been forthcoming. That is a serious indictment in terms of open government, which we seek both locally and nationally.

There are strong moral grounds for demanding a full independent inquiry to investigate why planning permission was granted in 1988 and why officers of Ealing council, under the direction and control of Ealing's Labour councillors—who were loonies—came to act as they did and to set up that complex on the only industrial estate in Northolt. That estate is the focus for local workers. If they do not have jobs, they look to that site and say that they ought to be employed there—but that cannot happen because of the mosque development. That is serious, and it is bound to be damaging and distressing to the community.

2.47 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry)** : My hon. Friend, the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has raised an issue of concern to his constituents with considerable vigour. I know that it has created a good deal of comment on his constituency. My hon. Friend has pursued the issue assiduously since 1987. I hope that this debate will help those opposing the development to understand why the Secretary of State will not intervene.

The facts can be simply stated. In 1987, Ealing council received a planning application for the construction of a mosque, a community centre and 22 town houses. In considering that application the council was required, among other material considerations, to have regard to the local plan that was then adopted for the area and to the views and representations of neighbours, borough residents and other interested parties. Those factors were taken into account by the council and planning permission was granted. I understand that building work is well advanced.

I understand that the granting of planning permission was not welcomed by many local residents. Their main objections, I understand, were to the loss of land intended for industrial development in an area where there is little such land, and the possible noise and disturbance caused by visitors to the mosque. My hon. Friend has made very clear to me the nature of his constituents' concerns.

I suggest that, before coming to some of the more specific concerns it would be helpful if the House reflected for a moment on how such decisions are taken. For 40 years we have had a planning system that balances the rights of landowners to improve their land if they wish with the public interest in any changes that may affect amenity. The power to restrain the rights of landowners by

*[Mr. Tony Baldry]*

requiring planning permission before certain changes are made was deliberately vested in local planning authorities. That means that local planning issues are decided locally by the people elected to represent local people. Those local representatives have a duty to take into account the views of people likely to be affected and, having done so, to decide whether planning permission should be granted.

Not only have the Government retained the primacy of local choice in planning decisions but we have deliberately taken the process a stage further. We have brought planning closer to the people it affects. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 requires all local planning authorities to prepare and maintain a development plan —in London boroughs, a unitary development plan. It also requires that all planning decisions are made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** I take the points made by my hon. Friend the Minister, but may I draw his attention to the part of my speech in which I explained the enormous objections raised by local people at public meetings—two or three of which were chaired by me—and in petitions and letters? Proper attention must be paid to local people and their views before planning permission is granted. My contention and that of the community that I represent is that no such attention was paid.

**Mr. Baldry:** My hon. Friend has made his point. Obviously, it must be for local planning committees to give such weight as they feel appropriate to local views. That is important, because they have a duty to take into account the views of people likely to be affected.

Recent Government policy guidance has made it clear that an applicant who proposes a development that conflicts with the development plan would need to produce convincing reasons to demonstrate why the plan should not prevail. Essentially, that means that we now have a plan-led system.

In preparing their plans, local planning authorities are required to consult widely in their area to ascertain the views of the whole community about how future development in the area should be shaped. At every stage, the planning authority must consider the views of local people and if it feels unable to accommodate them in some respects it is required to justify its decision.

A good plan will establish much firmer guidance for all concerned about what development will and will not be acceptable in any location. The Government want people to become involved in the preparation of those plans over the next few years.

Of course, the test of the plan-led system lies in the decisions on individual planning applications taken in the context of plan policies. Decision-making is not a straightforward, mechanistic process. The process involves a careful weighing of the issues to arrive at a reasoned, justified decision. The process should be open and transparent. By openness, I mean that it must be possible for all material considerations to be brought to the attention of the decision makers. That is where local views again become important. Notification and consultation about individual planning applications, to let members of the local community express their views, have long been part of the system. They are essential parts of ensuring that decisions reflect broad public interest. They are important parts of local choice. By introducing compulsory publicity and notification for all planning applications, the Government have considerably increased the opportunities available to communities to influence decisions. Local people, therefore, can expect their views on planning considerations to play an important part in shaping local planning policies.

The question remains: in what circumstances can or should my right hon. and learned Friend interfere with what is essentially a local decision-making process? The answer is, very selectively, and only in those few cases where the issue is not a local one. If we do not respect that principle, we simply do not have local decision making.

Parliament has given powers to my right hon. and learned Friend to intervene where it is in the wider interests of the country for him to do so. He may call in a planning application for his own decision. In doing so, he is effectively taking the decision away from those elected to represent local people and substituting his own judgment in a particular case. That is a power which must be used very selectively. The then Secretary of State for the Environment, in May 1987, set out his broad approach to the use of this power in a written answer. It might be helpful if I repeat part of it:

"the Government's general approach is not to interfere with the jurisdiction of the local planning authority unless it is necessary to do so. Each case must be considered on its individual merits . . . We will therefore continue to be very selective about calling in cases for our decision, and applications will in general be called in only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved. Such cases may include, for example, those which in our opinion could have wide effects beyond their immediate locality, which give rise to substantial regional or national controversy which may conflict with national policy on important matters, and those where the interests of national security or of foreign Governments may be involved."—[*Official Report*, 5 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. *346*.]

That is the broad approach adopted for intervening with a local planning authority. It is the approach consistently adopted by successive Secretaries of State since 1981 to the present day. Some numbers may help to illustrate the very selective use that has been made of that power. In 1991-92 local planning authorities decided about 500,000 planning applications. In comparison to that, the number of occasions on which the Secretary of State calls in a planning application—using the guidelines to which I have just referred—is something over 100 each year. That represents about one application in every 5,000. It would be inconsistent with our general approach to local choice for any much greater proportion of cases to be dealt with in that special way.

The development in Northolt underlies this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North has previously requested that that planning application should be called in for the Secretary of State to decide. However, my predecessors took the view that the issues raised by the development were, primarily, of local importance and that they should remain with the London borough of Ealing to decide. That is not to suggest that the issues it raised were unimportant. They clearly were important and have given rise to a great deal of argument on both sides. But the issues were essentially local and it was right that the decision should be taken locally. There was no issue of national or regional significance that would justify intervention by the Secretary of State.

Latterly my hon. Friend has gone even further and requested that the Secretary of State should revoke the planning permission. Secretaries of State have used their revocation powers only in the most exceptional circumstances. It would normally require a public inquiry. In the event of the planning permission's being revoked, not only would the development have to cease, but any building works might have to be removed. Very substantial compensation payments could arise, which would fall to be paid by the local planing authority. The House may be interested to know that the power to revoke has been used on only 18 occasions since 1955 and only once since 1973.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Does the local authority have the power to institue an inquiry into the way in which planning permission was given? I understand my hon. Friend's reasoning about why the Government will not institute such an inquiry, but does the local authority still have that power?

**Mr. Baldry:** The local authority granted planning permission and that permission is valid unless and until someone challenges its validity in the High Court and the court comes to a different ruling. It is open to any local authority to seek to inquire into any process, but any inquiry that the London borough of Ealing had into how any particular planning application came to be determined at any particular time would not in any way affect the validity of that application.

As I said earlier, building works have now started. To ensure their removal my right hon. and learned Friend would have to make a discontinuance order which again might attract a considerable compensation payment. That is scarcely surprising. As I have explained, if the Secretary of State intervenes with the jurisdiction of a local planning authority only in selective circumstances, the test for actually revoking one of its decisions must be even stricter.

Once again, the Government's approach to the use of those reserve powers has been reported to this House. In general, the Secretary of State's approach would be to revoke a planning permission:

"only if the original decision is judged to be grossly wrong, so that damage is likely to be done to the wider public interest." —[*Official Report*, 20 December 1989; Vol. 164, c. *327*.]

Those are the words used by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in an answer he gave to this House in December 1989 when he was Minister of State, Department of the Environment. That is the test which has been applied to the Northolt development. The mosque proposals have aroused local controversy. However, that was not justification for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to intervene in a local decision. Still less is that now grounds for my right hon. and learned Friend to apply the necessarily stricter approach to revocation. That is not just my view; it is the considered and consistent conclusion of my predecessors and successive Secretaries of State.

I realise that my hon. Friend and some of his constituents will not necessarily agree with the decision taken by Ealing council—clearly, they do not. I am, however, clear that it was a decision rightly within its competence to take and that, for the reasons that I hope I have made clear, it would be wrong for the Government to interfere.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.*

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 22 June 1992*

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### Animals (Illegal Imports)

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many illegally imported animals have been discovered by customs officers at each passenger terminal at Heathrow Airport in each of the past five years.

**Sir John Cope:** The discovery of illegally imported animals in the passenger terminals at Heathrow airport by customs officers is a rare occurrence because the airlines report illegally landed animals direct to Customs and to the Corporation of London's animal quarantine station before they are allowed to leave the aircraft. They are then taken direct to the animal quarantine station.

The numbers of animals landed illegally were as follows:

| Year | Number |
|---|---|
| 1991 | 160 |
| [1]1992 | 83 |

[1] To 17 June.

Records do not distinguish between terminals and are not available for earlier years. Only one of the animals concerned was discovered by Customs officers in a terminal.

### Income Tax Reliefs

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the revenue forgone in each category of allowances and reliefs, including MIRAS, to income tax in each of the last four years; and if he will estimate the regional distribution of the forgone revenue.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The latest available United Kingdom estimates for the last four years are provided in the 1990 and 1991 editions of "Inland Revenue Statistics" and in appendix D of the Statistical Supplement to the 1991 Autumn Statement (Cm 1920). The corresponding information for regions is not available.

### Civil Service

**Mr. Mans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will extend performance-related pay in the civil service.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government are already doing so. For most civil servants, a limited form of performance-related pay has been in place for some years. However, last year as part of our citizens charter programme the Chancellor made a statement to Parliament in which he announced the Government's intention to negotiate changes to the long-term civil service pay agreements to introduce, among other things, very substantial extensions of the existing performance pay arrangements.

Since then, a good deal of progress has been made in negotiating new schemes for virtually all civil servants, which will mean major changes for the ways in which they are paid. Any increase within a pay scale will have to be earned through performance, and better performers will earn greater increases. Pay increments will no longer be automatic. Every civil servant will have an element of his pay each year linked to his performance.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* industrial and *(b)* non-industrial civil servants were employed in (i) April 1979 and (ii) April 1992.

**Mr. Portillo:** Figures for 1 April 1992 are not yet available; they will be announced in Parliament within the next few weeks.

There were 166,460 industrial civil servants and 565,815 non-industrial civil servants at 1 April 1979; and 63,168 and 498,735 respectively at 1 October 1991.

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants were employed on the most recent date for which this information is available; and how many were employed on the same date in 1982 and 1987.

**Mr. Dorrell:** There were 561,903 civil servants at 1 October 1991, the latest published figures; 655,043 at 1 October 1982 and 585,155 at 1 October 1987.

### Landowners, Cumbria

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners and estates in Cumbria have benefited under the tax procedures by which tax liability is reduced on the condition that there is an undertaking to manage and protect the land from development and allow reasonable public access.

**Mr. Dorrell:** There are six cases in Cumbria where conditional exemption from inheritance tax and capital transfer tax has been granted to land and buildings in return for undertakings to maintain and preserve the property and provide reasonable public access to it.

### Land Access, Scotland

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the counties or regions in Scotland in which he has granted exemptions from *(a)* inheritance tax or *(b)* capital transfer tax for the granting of access to land for each year since 1983; if he will give the amount and the numbers granted in each county; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** There have been 26 designations of land in Scotland for exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax. In addition, there have been 37 designations of historic buildings in Scotland, some of which will have extended to surrounding land. Some designations of historic buildings have been for the purposes of the tax exemptions for maintenance funds rather than for exemption of the buildings themselves.

A detailed breakdown by county or region is not readily available.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Sir John Cope:** It is Treasury policy to recover or recycle products containing such substances where possible.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989; 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Sir John Cope:** The amount of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased over the period specified has been significantly less than one tonne, as is the current stock of such chemicals. No ozone-depleting chemicals are on order.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol and HCFC.

**Sir John Cope:** In line with both Government and EC policy, Treasury procurement is based on best value for money and objective non-discriminatory criteria.

Within these parameters, it is Treasury policy not to purchase, wherever possible, any substances containing CFCs, carbon tetrachloride, methyl chloroform or halons. This includes equipment and packaging where such substances have been used in manufacture. Where this is not possible, we expect suppliers to take all reasonable steps to comply speedily with the Montreal protocol.

## Earnings Statistics

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to April 1992 the information on net earnings provided in his reply of 10 February 1987 to the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), *Official Report*, columns *177-78*.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Estimates of the level of earnings for the top 5 per cent. of earners are not published. The information in the table is based on estimates of these levels derived from distributions of earnings published in the relevant new earnings survey. Information for April 1992 is not yet available. Earnings levels are for men or women as appropriate paid at adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Taxpayers are assumed to have no reliefs or allowances other than the appropriate personal allowance.

*Earnings after Income tax, national insurance contributions[1] and child benefit, April 1991*

| | £ per week |
|---|---|
| Single man | 445·90 |
| Married man | 459·10 |
| Married man with two children under 11 | 476·60 |
| Single women | 289·80 |

[1] At the contracted-in rate.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update to 1992-93 the information on real net earnings provided in his reply of 10 April 1986 to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns *193-94*.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Estimates for 1992-93 are as follows:

*Income tax and income tax + NIC[1] as percentage of gross earnings*
*Multiples of average earnings[2]*

| | ½ | 1 | 2 | 5 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Single* | | | | | |
| Tax | 17·1 | 19·7 | 26·2 | 34·5 | 37·2 |
| Tax + NIC | 24·5 | 27·7 | 30·9 | 36·4 | 38·2 |
| *Married* | | | | | |
| Tax | 13·6 | 17·4 | 24·3 | 33·7 | 36·9 |
| Tax + NIC | 21·0 | 25·3 | 29·0 | 35·6 | 37·8 |

*Changes in real net earnings after income tax and NIC (1956-57 = 100)*
*Multiples of average earnings*

| | ½ | 1 | 2 | 5 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single | 179·6 | 182·7 | 191·0 | 220·7 | 283·9 |
| Married | 177·1 | 176·8 | 189·1 | 217·4 | 279·4 |

[1] At the contracted-in rate.
[2] Full time adult males (all occupations).

## Tax Changes

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1992 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his reply of 21 October 1986 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, columns *807-8*.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Latest estimates of the annual change in income tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds announced in the 1992 Budget are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice, retention of the regime indexed as appropriate for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

*Average reduction in income tax per individual[1] in 1992-93 compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime*

| *Range of individual's income in 1992-93* £ | *Total reduction* £ million | *Average reduction* £ per annum |
|---|---|---|
| Under 5,000 | 500 | 150 |
| 5,000 to 10,000 | 32,000 | 400 |
| 10,000 to 15,000 | 4,500 | 730 |
| 15,000 to 20,000 | 4,300 | 1,060 |
| 20,000 to 30,000 | 5,000 | 1,590 |
| 30,000 to 50,000 | 3,600 | 2,960 |
| Over 50,000 | 10,300 | 21,000 |
| Total | 31,400 | 1,200 |

[1] Individuals liable to income tax under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

## Stamp Duty

**Mr. Moate:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Faversham may expect an answer to his written question number 192 of 8 June concerning stamp duty.

**Mr. Nelson:** I replied to my hon. Friend's question on 18 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *628*.

## EC Budget

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net contribution or the net receipt of each member state to or from the EC in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and if he will express these totals also as a sum per head of population in each member state.

**Sir John Cope:** The European Commission does not publish information on member states' net balances in respect of the EC budget. The latest information available is contained in the European Court of Auditors' report for 1990; this gives information on member states' gross contributions and some 85 per cent. of budgetary receipts, with administration and research the main items of expenditure excluded. Using this incomplete information, the following table gives member states' net contributions (+) or net receipts (−) for 1990, both in absolute terms and per head of population:

| | *mecu*[1] | *ecu*[1] *per head* |
|---|---|---|
| Belgium[2] | +774 | +77 |
| Denmark | −422 | −83 |
| Germany | +5,550 | +88 |
| Greece | −2,470 | −245 |
| Spain | −1,711 | −44 |
| France | +1,805 | +32 |
| Ireland | −1,892 | −541 |
| Italy | +417 | +7 |
| Luxembourg[2] | +60 | +150 |
| Netherlands | −368 | −25 |
| Portugal | −601 | −64 |
| United Kingdom | +3,387 | +59 |

[1] At current prices and exchange rates.
[2] Although the table shows Belgium and Luxembourg as net contributors in each year, they are not likely to have been when administrative receipts excluded from the Court of Auditors' report are taken into account.
*Source:* Member states' contributions and receipts—Court of Auditors Report; Population—Eurostat

## Travel Allowances

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the travelling and subsistence allowances payable on a daily basis to persons in public service and the standard motor mileage allowance for such persons for the year 1992-93; and how much of these allowances are chargeable to tax.

**Mr. Portillo** *[pursuant to his reply, 15 June 1992, col. 357]:* I regret that one of the figures in the tables was incorrect. The answer should have read as follows:

The travelling and subsistence allowance payable on a daily basis to persons in the public service are as follows:

*Standard rate of motor mileage allowances*

| *Cars with engine capacity:* | *Up to 1500cc* *Pence* | *1501cc-2000cc* *Pence* | *Over 2000cc* *Pence* |
|---|---|---|---|
| From 1 April 1992 | | | |
| Up to 5,000 miles | 35·7 | 40 | 43 |
| Over 7,000 miles | 17 | 21 | 27 |

*Subsistence allowances*

| *Day subsistence allowance (with effect from 1 August 1991)* | *Subsistence classification All classes* *£* |
|---|---|
| More than 5 hours | 3·90 |
| More than 10 hours | 8·60 |

| *Night subsistence allowance (with effect from 1 August 1991)* | *Subsistence classification* *1* *£* | *2* *£* | *3* *£* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London | 98·70 | 68·50 | 61·30 |
| Elsewhere | 85·85 | 63·15 | 48·85 |

| *Lodging allowance (paid after 30 nights) (with effect from 1 August 1991)* | *Subsistence classification* *1 and 2* *£* | *3* *£* |
|---|---|---|
| Married officer: | | |
| Inner London | 31·80 | 25·60 |
| Elsewhere | 29·90 | 23·80 |
| Single officer: | | |
| Inner London | 22·80 | 22·80 |
| Elsewhere | 21·00 | 21·00 |

These rates are reviewed annually. From 1 August 1992, Departments and agencies will determine their own motor mileage and subsistence rates. The excess between the motor mileage rates and the Inland Revenue fixed profit car scheme is taxable. The FPCS rates for 1992-93 are:

| *Cars with engine capacity* | *1001cc-1500cc* *Pence* | *1501cc-2000cc* *Pence* | *Over 2000cc* *Pence* |
|---|---|---|---|
| From 1 April 1992 | | | |
| Up to 4,000 miles | 30 | 38 | 51 |
| Over 4,000 miles | 17 | 21 | 27 |

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Prisoners (Medical Treatment)

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that are able to perform major medical operations on inmates.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** There are modern fully equipped surgical units situated at Parkhurst and Liverpool prisons: the latter is closed temporarily to facilitate the installation of integral sanitation. Operations are performed by surgeons from the NHS, but where major surgery or highly specialist equipment is required, the patient is transferred to an outside hospital.

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the procedures that are followed by his Department when payment has to be paid to a hospital for giving medical treatment to prison inmates and who is responsible for such payment.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** No costs to the prison service arise for treatment or other care which is provided to prisoners in

national health service facilities. The costs involved are ordinarily a matter for the prisoner's district health authority of origin.

## Personal Correspondence

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions personal correspondence in the possession of persons applying for temporary visitors' visas on arrival in the United Kingdom has been copied in each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** This information is not available.

## Electorates

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out, on the assumption of an unchanged number of parliamentary constituencies for England, *(a)* the 1992 electoral quota and *(b)* the entitlement of each county and London borough.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The 1992 electoral quota for England is 69,534. The entitlement of each county and London borough is given in the table.

| | *1992 Electorate* | *Entitlement* |
|---|---|---|
| *A. London boroughs* | | |
| City of London[1] | 3,862 | 10·06 |
| Barking and Dagenham | 111,231 | 1·60 |
| Barnet | 211,617 | 3·04 |
| Bexley | 168,328 | 2·42 |
| Brent | 169,035 | 2·43 |
| Bromley | 230,088 | 3·31 |
| Camden | 122,855 | 1·77 |
| Croydon | 244,184 | 3·51 |
| Ealing | 189,481 | 2·73 |
| Enfield | 196,309 | 2·82 |
| Greenwich | 157,276 | 2·26 |
| Hackney | 113,120 | 1·63 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | 100,125 | 1·44 |
| Haringey | 142,479 | 2·05 |
| Harrow | 145,619 | 2·09 |
| Havering | 180,826 | 2·60 |
| Hillingdon | 171,812 | 2·47 |
| Hounslow | 153,538 | 2·21 |
| Islington | 112,247 | 1·61 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 84,700 | 1·22 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 94,233 | 1·36 |
| Lambeth | 172,136 | 2·48 |
| Lewisham | 174,655 | 2·51 |
| Merton | 126,737 | 1·82 |
| Newham | 158,379 | 2·28 |
| Redbridge | 171,964 | 2·47 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 116,935 | 1·68 |
| Southwark | 174,317 | 2·51 |
| Sutton | 127,251 | 1·83 |
| Tower Hamlets | 113,129 | 1·63 |
| Waltham Forest | 163,252 | 2·35 |
| Wandsworth | 199,397 | 2·87 |
| Westminster | 109,738 | 1·58 |

[1] The whole of the City of London shall be included within a constituency, the name of which shall refer to the City of London.

| | *1992 electorate* | *Entitlement* |
|---|---|---|
| *B. Counties* | | |
| *Metropolitan* | | |
| Greater Manchester | 1,917,869 | 27·58 |
| Merseyside | 1,088,179 | 15·65 |
| South Yorkshire | 1,013,132 | 14·57 |
| Tyne and Wear | 875,162 | 12·59 |
| West Midlands | 1,978,106 | 28·45 |
| West Yorkshire | 1,578,994 | 22·71 |
| *Non-metropolitan* | | |
| Avon | 729,224 | 10·49 |
| Bedfordshire | 391,555 | 5·63 |
| Berkshire | 554,630 | 7·98 |
| Buckinghamshire | 478,462 | 6·88 |
| Cambridgeshire | 496,704 | 7·14 |
| Cheshire | 742,426 | 10·68 |
| Cleveland | 418,538 | 6·02 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 370,241 | 5·32 |
| Cumbria | 385,240 | 5·54 |
| Derbyshire | 727,515 | 10·46 |
| Devon | 795,793 | 11·44 |
| Dorset | 525,714 | 7·56 |
| Durham | 472,574 | 6·80 |
| East Sussex | 549,501 | 7·90 |
| Essex | 1,187,127 | 17·07 |
| Gloucestershire | 416,339 | 5·99 |
| Hampshire | 1,198,864 | 17·24 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 530,098 | 7·62 |
| Hertfordshire | 746,267 | 10·73 |
| Humberside | 674,380 | 9·70 |
| Isle of Wight | 101,442 | 1·46 |
| Kent | 1,159,379 | 16·67 |
| Lancashire | 1,077,486 | 15·50 |
| Leicestershire | 675,422 | 9·71 |
| Lincolnshire | 463,245 | 6·66 |
| Norfolk | 593,291 | 8·53 |
| Northamptonshire | 440,144 | 6·33 |
| Northumberland | 239,896 | 3·45 |
| North Yorkshire | 560,706 | 8·06 |
| Nottinghamshire | 786,385 | 11·31 |
| Oxfordshire | 422,930 | 6·08 |
| Shropshire | 316,882 | 4·56 |
| Somerset | 368,134 | 5·29 |
| Staffordshire | 809,921 | 11·65 |
| Suffolk | 483,323 | 6·95 |
| Surrey | 784,235 | 11·28 |
| Warwickshire | 378,414 | 5·44 |
| West Sussex | 558,975 | 8·04 |
| Wiltshire | 434,182 | 6·24 |

## Probation Officers

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that do not have a full-time probation officer working within the prison.

**Mr. Jack:** Only one. Her Majesty's prison Haslar has a part-time main grade probation officer working one and a half days per week.

## Phone Cards

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in England and Wales that allow inmates to use phone cards.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In keeping with the commitment given in the prison service's White Paper, provision for cardphones for inmates' use is being made in all establishments in England and Wales. Within the rolling programme of installation scheduled for completion by the end of July 1992, cardphones are operational in the establishments listed below;

*Her Majesty's prison service establishments with cardphones for the use of prisoners*

Acklington
Aldington
Ashwell
Askham Grange
Blantyre House

Brockhill
Camp Hill
Castington
Channings Wood
Cookham Wood
Deerbolt
Dover
Drake Hall
East Sutton Park
Eastwood Park
Erlestoke
Everthorpe
Featherstone
Feltham
Ford
Glen Parva
Gloucester
Guys Marsh
Haslar
Hatfield
Haverigg
Hewell Grange
Highpoint
Hollesley Bay Colony
Hollway
Huntercombe and Finnamore Wood Camp
Kingston
Kirkham
Kirklevington Grange
Lancaster
Latchmere House
Lewes
Leyhill
Lindholme
Littlehey
Morton Hall
The Mount
New Hall
Northallerton
Northeye
North Sea Camp
Norwich
Onley
Oxford
Pucklechurch
Ranby
Risley
Rochester
Rudgate
Send
Shepton Mallet
Spring Hill
Stafford
Standford Hill
Stocken
Stoke Heath
Styal
Sudbury/Foston Hall
Swansea
Thorn Cross
Thorp Arch
Usk/Prescoed
The Verne
Wayland
Wellingborough
Werrington
Wetherby
Whatton
Winchester
The Wolds
Wymott

## Traffic Wardens, Waltham Forest

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many traffic wardens are employed within the London borough of Waltham Forest; and by how much this figure will increase after the introduction of red routes.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a total of 63 traffic wardens operate in the area covering the London borough of Waltham Forest as well as parts of the London boroughs of Epping and Redbridge. No decision has been made about increasing the figure after the introduction of red routes.

## Juveniles

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by local authority the number of cases where juveniles were remanded by an application for an unruly certificate which local authorities were responsible for making in the periods of 1 July to 30 December 1990 and 1 January to 30 March 1992.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information requested is not recorded centrally. The only information available relates to Juveniles initially received on remand into prison service establishments. These statistics are published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" (table 2.7 of the Volume for 1990, Cm 1800), a copy of which is in the Library.

An unruliness certificate is required for such juveniles received as untried and for some of those received as convicted unsentenced; it is not required for those committed in custody to the Crown court for sentence under section 37 of the Magistrates Courts Act. Information by area is not available.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles were remanded in prison department custody between 1 July and 30 December 1990 and 1 January to 30 March 1992.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** Between 1 July and 31 December 1990, 496 juveniles were initially received into prison service establishments in England and Wales as untried prisoners and a further 38 juveniles were initially received as convicted unsentenced. Comparable provisional figures for the period 1 July to 31 December 1991 are 469 initially received as untried and 21 initially received as convicted unsentenced. Data for 1 January to 30 March 1992 are not yet available.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced 15-year-olds were in prison service custody on the most recent convenient date; in which establishments they were held; and which of these establishments also accommodate *(a)* young adults and *(b)* adults.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The readily available information is given in the table.

*Sentenced 15-year-olds held in prison service establishments on 31 December 1991*

| *Establishment* | *Number held* |
|---|---|
| **Male remand centres** | |
| Glen Parva[1] | 1 |
| **Male juvenile young offender institutions[2]** | |
| Feltham[3] | 12 |
| Kirklevington | 22 |
| Onley[3] | 20 |
| Werrington[3] | 14 |
| **Female closed young offender institutions** | |
| New Hall[4] | 1 |

| Establishment | Number held |
|---|---|
| Total | 70 |

[1]Also accommodates young adults.
[2]Juvenile young offender institutions also hold young offenders who have reached their seventeenth birthday and are awaiting transfer to another young offender institution.
[3]There are also other units at these sites which hold young adults.
[4]Also accommodates young adults. There is also an adult prison on the same site.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average daily population of remanded 15 and 16-year-old juveniles in the periods between 1 July and 30 December 1990 and 1 January and 30 March 1992.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The average daily population of juveniles is not readily available but between 31 July and 31 December 1990 the average end of month population of 15 and 16-year-old remand prisoners was 60 untried and 15 convicted unsentenced. Data for 1 January to 30 March 1992 are not yet available. Figures for 30 September and 31 December and for the same dates in 1991 are shown in the table.

*Population of unsentenced 15 and 16-year-olds in prison service establishments in England and Wales by type of prisoner.*

| | Untried | Convicted unsentenced |
|---|---|---|
| 1990 | | |
| 30 September | 59 | 17 |
| 31 December | 44 | 12 |
| 1991 | | |
| 30 September | 50 | 18 |
| 31 December | 47 | 12 |

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made on the effect of the current levels of juveniles remanded to prison department custody on the efficacy of the interim proposals announced for introduction from 1 October; and what consideration he has given to abolishing remands to prison department custody or continuing with the current arrangements.

**Mr. Jack:** The substantial decline in the number of 15 and 16-year-olds remanded to prison service establishments in recent years indicates that courts are committed to avoiding prison remands wherever possible. Courts' confidence in this approach will be strengthened by their new powers under the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to attach conditions and requirements when remanding juveniles to local authority accommodation. The Governmnent remains fully committed to abolishing prison remands for 15 and 16-year-olds as soon as the availability of alternative accommodation makes that possible. We will monitor closely the extent to which prison remands continue to be used under the new procedures.

## Emergency Services

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to set up the working party which will examine ways of protecting the police and other members of the emergency services from assault.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The first meeting of the working party on the physical protection of the police is expected to take place in the near future.

## Shop-lifting

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what study he has made of the use of police cautions with regard to alleged shop-lifting offences; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** My Department has not conducted any study of cautioning specifically for shop-lifting. But we expect to begin a research study later this year which will assess the response to Home Office circular 59/90, which aimed to promote good practice and consistency of decisions in the use of cautions.

## Short Changing

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been in each year, since 1987 in England and Wales, of retail staff accused of short-changing customers.

**Mr. Jack:** We cannot identify from the information held centrally the number of cases of theft in these specific circumstances.

## Escaped Prisoners

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners escaped from prison escort in each of the last five years; and how many of those prisoners remain at large.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The number of prisoners who escape from escort has been recorded centrally only since 20 June 1988. Records prior to that date were maintained in a different format and cannot be provided for less than a complete calendar year without disproportionate effort, and for that reason a time scale slightly longer than five years has been taken.

The number of prisoners escaping from prison escort from 1 January 1987 to 15 June 1992 were as follows:

| | Prisoners |
|---|---|
| 1 January 1987 to 31 December 1987 | 65 |
| 1 January 1988 to 31 December 1988 | 64 |
| 1 January 1989 to 31 December 1989 | 78 |
| 1 January 1990 to 31 December 1990 | 100 |
| 1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991 | 116 |
| 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 | 51 |

Recapture details have been recorded centrally only since 20 June 1988. However the records make no distinction between recaptured prisoners who escaped from escort, and those who escaped from penal establishments and may omit information about escaped prisoners who are subsequently remanded in custody for new offences. To cross-reference incidents of recapture with individual escapers could only be achieved by a manual search, at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped from prison in 1992; and from which prisons.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** From 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 there were 76 escape incidents from penal establishments; 133 prisoners escaped.

Most of these escapes were from low security category C prisons. The numbers of escapers form a very small proportion of those in custody.

The escapes were from the following penal establishments:

| Prison establishment | Date | Number of prisoners escaped |
|---|---|---|
| Lindholme | 8 January 1992 | 3 |
| Haverigg | 10 January 1992 | 1 |
| Dover | 11 January 1992 | 1 |
| Pentonville | 16 January 1992 | 1 |
| Gloucester | 18 January 1992 | 2 |
| Risley | 24 January 1992 | 2 |
| Aldington | 25 January 1992 | 1 |
| Feltham | 28 January 1992 | 2 |
| Feltham | 1 February 1992 | 1 |
| Downview | 2 February 1992 | 2 |
| Ranby | 2 February 1992 | 2 |
| Portland | 10 February 1992 | 3 |
| Channings Wood | 11 February 1992 | 2 |
| Ashwell | 15 February 1992 | 1 |
| Hindley | 13 February 1992 | 1 |
| Send | 17 February 1992 | 2 |
| Ranby | 20 February 1992 | 1 |
| Portland | 21 February 1992 | 1 |
| New Hall | 12 February 1992 | 1 |
| New Hall | 21 February 1992 | 2 |
| Glen Parva | 22 February 1992 | 4 |
| Ranby | 26 February 1992 | 1 |
| Dover | 27 February 1992 | 2 |
| Belmarsh | 27 February 1992 | 1 |
| Feltham | 28 February 1992 | 2 |
| Sudbury/Foston Hall | 2 March 1992 | 1 |
| Haslar | 7 March 1992 | 1 |
| Lindholme | 9 March 1992 | 1 |
| Haverigg | 9 March 1992 | 2 |
| Stocken | 7 March 1992 | 2 |
| Camp Hill | 11 March 1992 | 3 |
| Kirklevington | 15 March 1992 | 1 |
| Norwich | 17 March 1992 | 1 |
| Maidstone | 16 March 1992 | 2 |
| Wellingborough | 21 March 1992 | 2 |
| Cardiff | 21 March 1992 | 1 |
| Norwich | 24 March 1992 | 2 |
| Frankland | 1 April 1992 | 1 |
| Feltham | 1 April 1992 | 4 |
| Acklington | 3 April 1992 | 1 |
| Winchester | 7 April 1992 | 1 |
| Highpoint | 8 April 1992 | 4 |
| Channings Wood | 13 April 1992 | 1 |
| Lindholme | 20 April 1992 | 1 |
| Wellingborough | 17 April 1992 | 1 |
| Aldington | 20 April 1992 | 1 |
| Dover | 17 April 1992 | 1 |
| Feltham | 21 April 1992 | 5 |
| Aldington | 21 April 1992 | 1 |
| Featherstone | 24 April 1992 | 1 |
| Wandsworth | 27 April 1992 | 1 |
| Featherstone | 29 April 1992 | 2 |
| Wellingborough | 4 May 1992 | 1 |
| Holloway | 30 April 1992 | 1 |
| Littlehey | 6 May 1992 | 1 |
| Gloucester | 7 May 1992 | 1 |
| New Hall | 11 May 1992 | 3 |
| Erlestoke | 12 May 1992 | 1 |
| Winchester | 17 May 1992 | 2 |
| The Mount | 16 May 1992 | 1 |
| The Verne | 18 May 1992 | 2 |
| Portland | 20 May 1992 | 1 |
| Lindholme | 21 May 1992 | 1 |
| Stocken | 16 May 1992 | 1 |
| Glen Parva | 23 May 1992 | 3 |
| Gloucester | 25 May 1992 | 6 |
| Blantyre House | 25 May 1992 | 2 |
| Acklington | 28 May 1992 | 1 |
| Highpoint | 6 June 1992 | 3 |
| The Verne | 6 June 1992 | 2 |
| Holloway | 8 June 1992 | 1 |
| The Verne | 11 June 1992 | 2 |
| Swaleside | 12 June 1992 | 1 |
| Holloway | 15 June 1992 | 1 |
| Werrington House | 15 June 1992 | 7 |
| Brinsford | 15 June 1992 | 1 |

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the escapes and attempted escapes by prisoners from escorts in 1992; and if he will provide details.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** From 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 there were 44 escape incidents while prisoners were being escorted outside penal establishments. In those 44 incidents 51 prisoners escaped.

From 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 there were 16 attempted escape incidents while prisoners were being escorted outside penal establishments. Twenty five prisoners were involved in these attempted escapes. Further information is provided in the tables.

*Escapes from escort*

| Prison establishment | Date | Number of prisoners escaped |
|---|---|---|
| Winchester | 8 January 1992 | 1 |
| Leeds | 15 January 1992 | 1 |
| Cardiff | 3 January 1992 | 1 |
| Belmarsh | 16 January 1992 | 1 |
| Hollesley Bay | 16 January 1992 | 1 |
| Bullwood Hall | 21 January 1992 | 1 |
| Liverpool | 21 January 1992 | 6 |
| Risley | 24 January 1992 | 1 |
| Hindley | 29 January 1992 | 1 |
| Long Lartin | 2 March 1992 | 1 |
| Stafford | 4 February 1992 | 1 |
| Full Sutton | 4 February 1992 | 1 |
| Low Newton | 6 February 1992 | 1 |
| Leicester | 17 February 1992 | 1 |
| Holloway | 19 February 1992 | 1 |
| Chelmsford | 20 February 1992 | 1 |
| Norwich | 27 February 1992 | 1 |
| Castington | 27 February 1992 | 1 |
| Wymott | 4 February 1992 | 1 |
| Norwich | 4 March 1992 | 1 |
| Durham | 6 March 1992 | 2 |
| Hollesley Bay | 9 March 1992 | 1 |
| Brixton | 11 March 1992 | 1 |
| Hollesley Bay | 11 March 1992 | 1 |
| Maidstone | 18 March 1992 | 1 |
| Durham | 18 March 1992 | 1 |
| Exeter | 18 March 1992 | 1 |
| Low Newton | 21 March 1992 | 1 |
| Wymott | 27 March 1992 | 1 |
| Hollesley Bay | 28 March 1992 | 1 |
| Risley | 8 April 1992 | 1 |
| Risley | 10 April 1992 | 1 |
| Feltham | 16 April 1992 | 1 |
| Pentonville | 22 April 1992 | 1 |
| Thorp Arch | 27 April 1992 | 1 |
| Low Newton | 27 April 1992 | 1 |
| Channings Wood | 30 April 1992 | 1 |
| Garth | 16 May 1992 | 1 |
| Acklington | 20 May 1992 | 1 |
| Glen Parva | 20 May 1992 | 1 |
| Dartmoor | 21 May 1992 | 2 |
| Moorland | 28 May 1992 | 1 |
| Bullingdon | 5 June 1992 | 1 |
| Liverpool | 17 June 1992 | 1 |

| Prison establishment | Date | Number of attempted escapers |
|---|---|---|
| Holloway | 13 January 1992 | 1 |
| Holloway | 16 January 1992 | 1 |
| Brinsford | 21 January 1992 | 1 |
| Garth | 22 January 1992 | 1 |
| Chelmsford | 14 February 1992 | 1 |
| Glen Parva | 19 March 1992 | 6 |
| Garth | 20 March 1992 | 1 |
| Brixton | 30 March 1992 | 3 |
| Acklington | 3 April 1992 | 1 |
| Brinsford | 1 April 1992 | 2 |
| Acklington | 3 April 1992 | 1 |
| Swaleside | 13 May 1992 | 1 |
| Pentonville | 24 May 1992 | 1 |
| Stoke Heath | 28 May 1992 | 2 |
| Grendon | 4 June 1992 | 1 |
| Swansea | 5 June 1992 | 1 |

## Prison Staff

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have not returned to work following maternity leave in each of the last five years; and what has been the cost to his Department of prison officers not returning to work following maternity leave.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** According to centrally available information, none. Information relating to the years 1988-89 is not readily available.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for providing child care facilities for prison workers.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** A nursery was opened at Her Majesty's prison Holloway in May 1991; other prison service establishments who have shown an intererst in providing child care facilities are receiving encouragement and guidance. General guidance on the provision of child care facilities, drawing on the experience of Holloway and other departmental nurseries, is being prepared and will be circulated to all establishments, later this year.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what prison establishments have received extra staff since 1 April in accordance with the Fresh Start framework agreement and as a result of the further two-hour reduction in the working week of prison officers.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** All the prison officers necessary to implement the final stage of the framework agreement were posted before April 1992. Allocations to establishments were made on the basis of their relative needs and their contributions to the Fresh Start efficiency improvements.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have been assaulted whilst performing escort duties in each of the last five years, including 1992.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The numbers of prison staff assaulted while performing escort duties are not recorded centrally. However, the following table shows the numbers of prison staff reported as having been injured during the course of incidents of prisoners escaping from escort or attempting to escape from escort. Records prior to 20 June 1988 are not available.

*Number of prison staff injured during attempted/escapes from escort*

| | Escape from Escort | Incident Attempted Escape from Escort | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 20 June 1988 to 31 December 1988 | 21 | 14 | 35 |
| 1 January 1989 to 31 December 1989 | 19 | 5 | 24 |
| 1 January 1990 to 31 December 1990 | 19 | 20 | 39 |
| 1 January 1991 to 31 December 1991 | 40 | 19 | 59 |
| 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 | 10 | 10 | 20 |

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers are from ethnic minorities; and in what establishments they work.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** On 18 June 1992, the total number of Prison Service grades who had volunteered their ethnic origin as other than white was 96. A breakdown, by establishment, is as follows:

| | Number |
|---|---|
| HMP Belmarsh | 2 |
| HMP Birmingham | 6 |
| HMP Blundeston | 1 |
| HMP Brixton | 5 |
| HMP Bullingdon | 2 |
| HMP Camp Hill | 2 |
| HMP Chelmsford | 2 |
| HMP Coldingley | 1 |
| HMP Downview | 1 |
| HMP Elmley | 7 |
| HMP Garth | 1 |
| HMP Gartree | 1 |
| HMP Haverigg Camp | 2 |
| HMP Hindley | 1 |
| HMP Holloway | 3 |
| HMP Holme House | 1 |
| HMP Hull | 1 |
| HMP Leeds | 1 |
| HMP Leicester | 1 |
| HMP Lewes | 2 |
| HMP Lindholme | 1 |
| HMP Littlehey | 2 |
| HMP Liverpool | 1 |
| HMP Long Lartin | 1 |
| HMP Manchester | 1 |
| HMP Moorland | 1 |
| HMP Nottingham | 1 |
| HMP Parkhurst | 1 |
| HMP Pentonville | 8 |
| HMP Shrewsbury | 1 |
| HMP Stocken | 1 |
| HMP Swaleside | 1 |
| HMP Wandsworth | 7 |
| HMP Wayland | 1 |
| HMP Wellingborough | 1 |
| HMP Whitemoor | 3 |

| | Number |
|---|---|
| HMP Wormwood Scrubs | 1 |
| HMP and RC Cardiff | 2 |
| HMP and RC Exeter | 1 |
| HMP and RC Winchester | 1 |
| HMP and YOI Styal | 1 |
| HMRC Brockhill | 1 |
| HMYOI Bullwood Hall | 1 |
| HMYOI Eastwood Park | 1 |
| HMYOI Northallerton | 2 |
| HMYOI Swinfen Hall | 2 |
| HMYOI The Mount | 1 |
| HMYOI and RC Brinsford | 2 |
| HMYOI and RC Feltham | 3 |
| HMYOI and RC Glen Parva | 2 |

However, these figures are based on a voluntary survey of ethnic origin to which only 32 per cent. of prison officer grades responded. A further survey is being carried out.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have been assaulted in 1992; and at which prisons these assaults took place.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** From 1 January 1992 to 15 June 1992 there were 319 incidents recorded of assaults on prison staff. This figure is for all prison staff grade 1 to 8.

The figure is for all recorded assaults on staff and includes assaults incurred by staff whilst on duty within and outside penal establishments. Assaults are recorded as either major or minor incidents. Major assaults are those assaults where the matter has been reported to the police, while minor assaults are those which are not reported to the police. The total figure comprises 273 minor assaults and 46 major assaults.

The recorded assault incidents were at the following penal establishments.

*Major assaults on staff*

| *Establishment* | *Number of assaults* |
|---|---|
| Aldington | 1 |
| Bedford | 1 |
| Belmarsh | 2 |
| Blundeston | 1 |
| Brinsford | 3 |
| Bristol | 1 |
| Brixton | 1 |
| Cardiff | 2 |
| Castington | 2 |
| Chelmsford | 2 |
| Coldingley | 2 |
| Cookham Wood | 1 |
| Elmley | 1 |
| Frankland | 1 |
| Full Sutton | 2 |
| Garth | 1 |
| Hindley | 1 |
| Hoolesley Bay | 1 |
| Holloway | 2 |
| Lewes | 1 |
| Lindholme | 1 |
| Liverpool | 1 |
| Maidstone | 1 |
| Pentonville | 2 |
| Preston | 1 |
| Pucklechurch | 1 |
| Reading | 1 |
| Risley | 1 |
| Rochester | 1 |
| Shepton Mallet | 1 |
| Stafford | 1 |
| Styal | 1 |
| Swansea | 2 |
| Winchester | 1 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 1 |

*Minor assaults on staff*

| *Establishment* | *Number of assaults* |
|---|---|
| Acklington | 1 |
| Albany | 2 |
| Aylesbury | 8 |
| Bedford | 2 |
| Belmarsh | 8 |
| Birmingham | 6 |
| Blundeston | 1 |
| Brinsford | 1 |
| Bristol | 1 |
| Brixton | 7 |
| Bullwood Hall | 4 |
| Camp Hill | 1 |
| Canterbury | 4 |
| Cardiff | 3 |
| Chelmsford | 3 |
| Coldingley | 4 |
| Dartmoor | 3 |
| Dover | 1 |
| Durham | 1 |
| Everthorpe | 3 |
| Exeter | 1 |
| Featherstone | 3 |
| Frankland | 8 |
| Full Sutton | 11 |
| Gloucester | 1 |
| Gartree | 1 |
| Glen Parva | 5 |
| Garth | 6 |
| Grendon/Spring Hill | 4 |
| Highpoint | 4 |
| Hindley | 2 |
| Hollesley Bay Colony | 1 |
| Holloway | 8 |
| Leeds | 5 |
| Lindholme | 1 |
| Littlehey | 1 |
| Liverpool | 3 |
| Long Lartin | 2 |
| Low Newton | 5 |
| Maidstone | 1 |
| Manchester | 6 |
| Moorland | 1 |
| The Mount | 4 |
| Norwich | 6 |
| Nottingham | 3 |
| Onley | 1 |
| Parkhurst | 1 |
| Pentonville | 3 |
| Portland | 1 |
| Preston | 1 |
| Risley | 9 |
| Rochester | 30 |
| Shepton Mallet | 2 |
| Stafford | 5 |
| Stocken | 3 |
| Stoke Heath | 7 |
| Swaleside | 13 |
| Wakefield | 1 |
| Wandsworth | 2 |
| Wayland | 2 |
| Winchester | 4 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 29 |
| Wymott | 2 |

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the targeted staffing level and the actual staffing level at each prison establishment.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I will write to the hon. Member with this information.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women prison officers there are; and in what establishments they work.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The available information is as follows:

| *Establishment* | *Total* |
|---|---|
| Acklington | 1 |
| Albany | 6 |
| Aldington | 1 |
| Askham Grange | 32 |
| Aylesbury | 8 |
| Bedford | 8 |
| Belmarsh | 59 |
| Birmingham | 21 |
| Blundeston | 2 |
| Brinsford | 29 |
| Bristol | 11 |
| Brixton | 34 |
| Brockhill | 2 |
| Bullingdon | 30 |
| Bullwood Hall | 72 |
| Camp Hill | 9 |
| Canterbury | 10 |
| Cardiff | 5 |
| Castington | 4 |
| Channings Wood | 4 |
| Chelmsford | 13 |
| Coldingley | 7 |
| Cookham Wood | 47 |
| Dartmoor | 11 |
| Deerbolt | 5 |
| Dorchester | 4 |
| Downview | 8 |
| Drake Hall | 53 |
| Durham | 45 |
| East Sutton Park | 18 |
| Eastwood park | 5 |
| Elmley | 24 |
| Erlestoke House | 2 |
| Everthorpe | 2 |
| Exeter | 7 |
| Featherstone | 1 |
| Feltham | 15 |
| Ford | 1 |
| Frankland | 18 |
| Full Sutton | 28 |
| Garth | 20 |
| Gartree | 11 |
| Glen Parva | 9 |
| Gloucester | 6 |
| Grendon | 10 |
| Guys Marsh | 2 |
| Hatfield | 1 |
| Haverigg | 1 |
| Hewell Grange | 2 |
| Highdown | 1 |
| Highpoint | 5 |
| Hindley | 9 |
| Hollesley Bay | 4 |
| Holloway | 252 |
| Holme House | 21 |
| Hull | 8 |
| Huntercombe | 7 |
| Kingston | 2 |
| Kirlevington | 2 |
| Leeds | 17 |
| Leicester | 6 |
| Lewes | 14 |
| Leyhill | 2 |
| Lincoln | 11 |
| Lindholme | 3 |
| Littlehey | 5 |
| Liverpool | 16 |
| Long Lartin | 11 |
| Low Newton | 27 |
| Maidstone | 7 |
| Manchester | 9 |
| Moorland | 29 |
| Mount | 11 |
| New Hall | 74 |
| North Sea Camp | 3 |
| Northallerton | 5 |
| Norwich | 12 |
| Nottingham | 3 |
| Onley | 10 |
| Parkhurst | 10 |
| Pentonville | 18 |
| Portland | 2 |
| Preston | 9 |
| PSITG | 2 |
| Pucklechurch | 46 |
| Reading | 6 |
| Risley | 87 |
| Rochester | 12 |
| Send | 2 |
| Shepton Mallet | 1 |
| Shrewsbury | 8 |
| Stafford | 12 |
| Standford Hill | 1 |
| PSC Newbold Revel | 1 |
| PSC Wakefield | 3 |
| Stocken | 6 |
| Stoke Heath | 2 |
| Styal | 90 |
| Swaleside | 20 |
| Swansea | 3 |
| Swinfen Hall | 3 |
| Thorn Cross | 1 |
| Usk | 3 |
| Wakefield | 15 |
| Wandsworth | 19 |
| Wayland | 10 |
| Wellingborough | 7 |
| Wetherby | 3 |
| Whatton | 2 |
| Whitemoor | 49 |
| Winchester | 7 |
| Woodhill | 9 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 26 |
| Wymott | 3 |
| Total | 1,803 |

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has given today to a similar question.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his

Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** We are currently reviewing our policy on these matters and I will write to the hon. Member when this work has been completed.

## Prison Meals

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weekly cost of providing inmates with meals at each prison establishment.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** In 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, the average weekly cost of providing meals for inmates was as follows:

| *Establishment* | *Cost* |
|---|---|
| Acklington | 12·53 |
| Albany | 17·25 |
| Aldington | 15·77 |
| Ashwell | 15·38 |
| Askham Grange | 17·21 |
| Aylesbury | 18·12 |
| Bedford | 16·35 |
| Birmingham | 9·80 |
| Blantyre House | 27·22 |
| Blundeston | 15·86 |
| Bristol | 16·06 |
| Brixton | 9·71 |
| Brockhill | 10·97 |
| Bullwood Hall | 26·99 |
| Camp Hill | 13·70 |
| Campsfield House | 61·17 |
| Canterbury | 12·26 |
| Cardiff | 13·45 |
| Castington | 13·84 |
| Channings Wood | 11·97 |
| Chelmsford | 13·78 |
| Coldingley | 14·79 |
| Cookham Wood | 18·68 |
| Dartmoor | 13·68 |
| Deerbolt | 10·77 |
| Dorchester | 16·36 |
| Dover | 12·99 |
| Downview | 30·42 |
| Drake Hall | 20·02 |
| Durham | 10·96 |
| East Sutton Park | 28·55 |
| Eastwood Park | 19·87 |
| Erlestoke | 14·43 |
| Everthorpe | 13·78 |
| Exeter | 14·04 |
| Featherstone | 12·59 |
| Feltham | 16·71 |
| Ford | 12·58 |
| Frankland | 15·65 |
| Full Sutton | 14·76 |
| Garth | 15·13 |
| Gartree | 18·44 |
| Glen Parva | 12·09 |
| Gloucester | 13·92 |
| Grendon | 16·10 |
| Guys Marsh | 20·37 |
| Haslar | 17·37 |
| Hatfield | 12·89 |
| Haverigg | 13·82 |
| Hewell Grange | 20·90 |
| High Point | 13·31 |
| Hindley | 13·12 |
| Hollesley Bay | 27·82 |
| Holloway | 12·62 |
| Hull | 11·58 |
| Huntercombe | 18·53 |
| Kingston | 13·26 |
| Kirkham | 17·48 |
| Kirklevington | 22·98 |
| Lancaster | 14·37 |
| Latchmere House | 14·20 |
| Leeds | 10·77 |
| Leicester | 15·47 |
| Lewes | 13·31 |
| Leyhill | 16·81 |
| Lincoln | 11·16 |
| Lindholme | 23·80 |
| Littlehey | 11·68 |
| Liverpool | 14·07 |
| Long Lartin | 17·82 |
| Lowdham Grange | 184·16 |
| Low Newton | 16·38 |
| Maidstone | 11·56 |
| Manchester | 34·54 |
| Morton Hall | 14·50 |
| Mount | 57·54 |
| New Hall | 17·38 |
| Northallerton | 16·10 |
| North Eye | 15·70 |
| North Sea Camp | 13·99 |
| Norwich | 18·54 |
| Nottingham | 15·53 |
| Onley | 10·88 |
| Oxford | 18·20 |
| Parkhurst | 18·52 |
| Pentonville | 14·56 |
| Portland | 14·51 |
| Preston | 12·58 |
| Pucklechurch | 19·83 |
| Ranby | 14·09 |
| Reading | 14·89 |
| Risley | 15·57 |
| Rochester | 15·66 |
| Rudgate | 15·44 |
| Send | 22·46 |
| Shepton Mallet | 15·45 |
| Shrewsbury | 45·65 |
| Stafford | 11·41 |
| Standford Hill | 18·63 |
| Stocken | 12·53 |
| Stoke Heath | 14·23 |
| Styal | 16·00 |
| Sudbury | 12·91 |
| Swaleside | 11·72 |
| Swansea | 16·18 |
| Swinfen Hall | 16·77 |
| Thorn Cross | 19·56 |
| Thorp Arch | 14·35 |
| Usk | 17·49 |
| Verne | 12·61 |
| Wakefield | 13·79 |
| Wandsworth | 10·76 |
| Wayland | 13·43 |
| Wellingborough | 22·30 |
| Werrington | 15·23 |
| Wetherby | 17·88 |
| Whatton | 13·18 |
| Winchester | 13·80 |
| Wormwood Scrubs | 16·16 |
| Wymott | 12·86 |

### Victim Support

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to provide additional revenue support to local victim support groups to assist in financing expenses for voluntary, unpaid helpers.

**Mr. Jack:** Home Office funding for local victim support schemes, provided by means of a grant to the national organisation, Victim Support, rose by 28 per cent. to £6·9 million between 1991-92 and 1992-93. It is set to rise a further 15 per cent. to £7·9 million next year. Within broad parameters agreed with the Home Office the allocation of those funds to individual schemes is a matter for Victim Support.

### Wolds Private Prison

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the code of minimum standards that is applied to the Wolds private prison via the contract specification documents differing from the standards in the state prisons.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** One of the objectives of the policy of contracting out the management of prisons is to secure better value for money. The specifications drawn up for Wolds remand prison and Blakenhurst prison therefore deliberately seek high standards of performance by contractors. These standards are also in line with the direction in which the rest of the prison service is heading.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the incident at the Wolds prison on 4 June.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** On the evening of 4 June a prisoner at Wolds remand prison was assaulted by other prisoners and sustained minor injuries. He was seen by medical staff. The police were called in, but they have been unable to pursue their inquiries because the prisoner is not willing to be interviewed.

### Anabolic Steroids

**Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department last reviewed the proposal to change the drug classification category of anabolic steroids to make possession of such substances without prescription a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* Anabolic steroids are prescription-only medicines in the United Kingdom. Under the Medicines Act 1968 it is an offence to sell steroids or to possess them for the purpose of sale, without a licence.

Under the provisions of section 45(8) of the Act, a person found guilty of such an offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £2,000; and on conviction on indictment to a fine or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or both.

Last year, the Government asked the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and the relevant trade and professional bodies for their views on the question of bringing anabolic steroids under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which allows strict controls to be imposed on dangerous and harmful drugs. The view at that time of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and the other bodies consulted was that there was not a sufficiently strong case for bringing steroids within the controls of the 1971 Act.

However, we decided that further action on steroids was necessary. We brought forward a package of measures targeted particularly at the young and designed to tackle misuses in a number of ways, including additional research into the extent of steroid misuse; further research to improve the testing and detection methods used in sporting circles; an enhanced educational effort aimed mainly at schools and competitions; increased action against those who advertise steroids without a licence in contravention of the Medicines Act 1968.

We intend, subject to a suitable legislative opportunity, to change the law to make it an offence to supply anabolic steroids to minors.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Agencies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Public Record Office as an agency; and whether the cost was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The cost of the launch of the Public Record Office as an agency was borne by the Public Record Office, and related questions are the responsibility of the Agency's chief executive, Mrs. Sarah Tyacke, to whom I have referred this question for reply. She will write to the hon. Member and copies of her reply will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the maximum salary payable, including performance-related element, and the length of time of the contract, of the chief executive of the Public Record Office.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The current maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Public Record Office, including a performance-related element, is £57,500. The contract is for three years, 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1995. It is renewable.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Public Record Office; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** This is a personal matter for the chief executive. I have drawn the question to her attention and have invited her to write to the hon. Member.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Tibet

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when British diplomats last visited Lhasa; what was their itinerary; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Goodlad:** Two British diplomats, including a first secretary from our embassy in Peking, visited Tibet between 16 and 25 May. They visited Lhasa and Shigatze. They carried out a programme of calls on the local authorities, focusing on human rights, consular matters and economic development.

## EC Commission

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many hours a week are worked by *(a)* the European Commission staff and *(b)* Commissioners; and how many days a year are on average lost to illness linked to overwork by *(a)* Commission staff and *(b)* Commissioners.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** I am informed by the Commission that its staff work 37½ statutory hours per week, and that statutory hours for Commissioners are not specified.

Staff absences are a matter for the Commission. Statistics are not available on days lost to illness linked to overwork.

## Disarmament

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 15 June, *Official Report*, column *352*, from where the United Kingdom and EC working papers to the UN Disarmament Commission, A/CN. 10/172 and A/CN. 10/165 respectively, to which he makes reference, are available; and if he will arrange for copies to be made available in the Library.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We are making arrangements for copies of these papers to be placed in the Library.

## Yugoslavia

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of United Nation's Security Council resolutions relating to Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We are seeking the implementation in full of all Security Council resolutions on Yugoslavia. Resolution 752 of 15 May 1992 demanded, inter alia, a ceasefire in Bosnia-Herzegovina and an end to interference in that state by the Yugoslav people's army (JNA) and Croatian army. Resolution 757 of 30 May imposed wide-ranging sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro as a way of bringing pressure on them to comply with resolution 752. Resolution 757 has been implemented in the United Kingdom and its dependent territories by five Orders in Council. We fully support the efforts of the United Nations to implement resolution 758 of 8 June which aims to secure Sarajevo airport in order to deliver humanitarian assistance.

## European Parliament, Salaries

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will set out in £ sterling the current salary and allowances, distinguishing office costs, travel and subsistence, for a British Member of the European Parliament.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** British Members of the European Parliament receive the same salary as that paid to Members of the House of Commons, i.e. £30,854 per year. The allowance figures were set out in the Lord President's answer to a written question from the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), *Official Report*, 17 February 1992, column *30*.

## Albania

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British diplomatic representation in Tirana.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We have decided to send a member of the Diplomatic Service to open an office in Tirana for the duration of the British Presidency of the European Community. The French Government have kindly agreed to provide office accommodation. Her Majesty's Ambassador in Rome will continue to be accredited (on a non-resident basis) to Tirana.

## Ozone-depleting chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Goodlad:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has appointed a firm of environmental management consultants to carry out a programme of environmental audits of its home estate. One of the purposes of the audits, which are scheduled for completion in September 1992, is to assess the possibilities within the Department for the recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Goodlad:** It is not possible to provide the information requested as the figures are not available. However, the stock of ozone-depleting chemicals stored within the Department is minimal.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Goodlad:** It is the policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office not to purchase ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances where their use is non-essential and where value for money alternatives are available.

The Department will cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances in accordance with the Government's response to the Montreal protocol and EC Regulation 594/91.

## Amritsar Massacre

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now release all papers relating to the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Amritsar on 13 April 1919.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** I am unaware of any FCO records relating to the Amritsar massacre of 13 April 1919 that are not available to researchers at the Oriental and India Office collections of the British Library.

## Government Communications Headquarters

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff employed at the Government communications headquarters have committed suicide since 1979; and if he will list the date of each suicide and the coroner's court which heard the inquest.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** To the best of my knowledge, having consulted GCHQ, the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is as follows:

| | *Coroner's court* |
|---|---|
| 16 December 1980 | Cheltenham |
| 24 November 1982 | Cheltenham |
| 7 August 1986 | Taunton |
| 31 July 1986 | Gloucester |
| 21 January 1990 | Scarborough |
| 10 March 1991 | Cheltenham |
| 7 March 1992 | Tewkesbury |
| 19 March 1992 | Cheltenham |

Before 1982 GCHQ did not keep a separate record of employee suicides. Figures before that date are given to the best of GCHQ's knowledge.

## EC Presidency

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement outlining the basis on which consideration is being given to the appointment of the President of the European Commission for a further period of over two years; and what is the specific section of the relevant EC treaty which permits the extended period.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The next President of the Commission will be appointed for two years in accordance with the provisions of article 161 of the treaty of Rome:

"The President and the six Vice-Presidents of the Commission shall be appointed from among its members for a term of two years in accordance with the same procedure as that laid down for the appointment of members of the Commission. Their appointment may be renewed".

# TRANSPORT

## Public Inquiries

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many public inquiries, both public and with written evidence, were held during the last year to the nearest convenient date and for each of the previous 10 years, respectively.

**Mr. Norris:** The chief planning inspector's annual reports for the years in question record the following number of inquiries for which reports have been submitted to my right hon. Friend:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1981 | 150 |
| 1982 | 137 |
| 1983 | 134 |
| 1984 | 162 |
| 1985-86 | [1]186 |
| 1986-87 | 129 |
| 1987-88 | 106 |
| 1988-89 | 123 |
| 1989-90 | 134 |
| 1990-91 | 134 |

[1] 15-month period.

## EC Funds

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the criteria which determine whether EC funds will be made available for transport infrastructure projects in member states, and the United Kingdom in particular; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Norris:** Council Regulation (EEC) No. 3359/90, of 20 November 1990 (OJ No. L326/1) established the current three year ad hoc EC Transport Infrastructure Programme which expires at the end of 1992. Seven major schemes were defined as priorities for funding. Those affecting the United Kingdom are the Paris-London-Brussels-Amsterdam-Cologne high speed rail network; the A5/A55 North Wales coast road link to Ireland; and improvements to the Dublin-Belfast railway line. The criteria for assessing individual projects are set out in Article 4 of the Regulation:

"—the benefit and greatest usefulness of the project to international Community traffic, assessed by its contribution to the objectives set out in Article 1. Among the factors which must be included are:
—the importance of present or potential intra-Community international traffic;
—the importance of exchanges between the Community and third countries on the route involved in the project;
—the extent of the project's contribution to the creation of a homogeneous and balanced network within the Community framework, geared to existing and future transport needs;
—the socio-economic return on the project;
—the project's consistency with the other Community measures taken under the common transport policy or other Community policies and with the other national measures given priority in national transport infrastructure plans and programmes;
—particular difficulties in raising finance;
—inability of national or regional authorities to carry out the project alone".

Criteria for EC funding under the European regional development fund for transport infrastructure projects in objective 1, objective 2 and objective 5*b* areas depend on the priorities set out in the relevant Community support frameworks which are agreed between the Commission and member states.

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of forecasts of future EC funding for United Kingdom transport infrastructure projects broken down for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and by mode of transport.

**Mr. Norris:** The information in the table is an estimate of receipts based on grant allocations from the current three year EC transport infrastructure programme and from previous programmes. The precise timing of payments will depend on the progress of work on the relevant schemes.

| | Road | | Rail | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ECU (million) | £ (million) (approx) | ECU (million) | £ (million) (approx) | ECU (million) | £ (million) (approx) |
| England | 7·38 | 5·19 | 21·00 | 14·76 | 28·38 | 19·95 |
| Wales | 11·26 | 7·92 | — | — | 11·26 | 7·92 |
| Northern Ireland | 0·44 | 0·31 | — | — | 0·44 | 0·31 |
| Scotland | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 19·08 | 13·42 | 21·00 | 14·76 | 40·08 | 28·18 |

The present three-year transport infrastructure programme is due to finish at the end of 1992, and no decisions have yet been taken about any further programme thereafter.

Grants for certain transport infrastructure projects are also available from the European regional development fund (ERDF). Future receipts will depend on the current negotiations on general future financing; and on the review of the EC structural funds, including ERDF, due to take place before the end of 1993.

It is not possible to forecast future loans to United Kingdom projects from the European Investment Bank or the European Coal and Steel Community.

## M25

**Sir Geoffrey Pattie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans exist for feeder-distributor roads for the M25; when they will be published; and whether these plans include environmental considerations.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) on 16 June at column *203*. The full range of environmental considerations have been taken into account in arriving at the proposals which will be the subject of the public consultation.

## Coastguards

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the number of auxiliary coastguards and the availability of equipment including cliff rescue gear and four-wheel drive vehicles at North Berwick.

**Mr. Norris:** Under proposals arising from the accepted recommendations of the Coastguard sector review, the North Berwick Auxiliary Coastguard Company is to be reduced in numbers from nine to five persons, and the current cliff rescue equipment and four wheel drive vehicle withdrawn on operational grounds.

Over the last three years the majority of incidents have required the attendance of only one or two auxiliaries, and only one cliff incident occurred; even this did not require the use of cliff rescue gear. The four wheel drive vehicle is to be replaced by a smaller van since there will no longer be a requirement to carry cliff rescue equipment.

A cliff rescue facility will continue to be provided by the helicopters from either RAF Leuchars or Boulmer.

## M3

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the proposed diversion of the Itchen navigation into a tunnel by his Department in pursuance of the M3 extension scheme at Twyford down.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** In accordance with the decision following the 1987-88 public inquiry, a 1·8 metre culvert will be provided for the Itchen navigation under the M3 and diverted B3335. This will maintain the flow of water along the existing watercourse.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Norris:** General policy on the recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals is set out in the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside. My Department has made arrangements for the recycling of halon fire extinguishers in buildings which it occupies.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department's policy is to avoid the purchase of ozone-depleting chemicals and products that contain or use these substances during manufacture. The use of these chemicals are planned to be phased out in line with the Government's response to the Montreal protocol.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Norris:** The Department has not purchased any ozone-depleting chemicals in bulk in the last three years. There are approximately 1,000 portable halon fire extinguishers in the buildings occupied by the Department and these are planned to be replaced by the end of 1993.

## A38

**Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to announce possible routes for the A38 trunk road improvement scheme between Saltash and Trerulefoot; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I am planning to consult the public on proposals for the Saltash to Trerulefoot section of the A38 early next year.

**Mr. Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to announce his preferred route for the A38 trunk road improvement to the west of Dobwalls; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** I am planning to consult the public on proposals for the Doublebois to West Taphouse section of the A38 in the autumn and to announce the preferred route early next year.

## Humber Bridge

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the Humber bridge debt; and when he expects to conclude his discussions with the bridge board and others which will lead to a proportion of the debt being written off.

**Mr. Kenneth Carlisle:** The estimated debt of the Humber bridge was £439 million at 31 March 1992. I shall shortly be meeting the bridge board to discuss plans for measures to reduce the debt burden. Pending legislation, growth of the debt has been halted by the payment of Government grant.

## Nuclear Fuel

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current safety regulations for the transport into and out of the United Kingdom of fresh nuclear fuel, irradiated nuclear fuel, plutonium metal and oxides of plutonium by fixed wing aircraft and helicopter.

**Mr. Norris:** The transport of radioactive material by air is regulated by the Air Navigation (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1985, as amended.

## Coal Trucks, Liverpool

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what talks he has had with British Rail about the covering of coal trucks passing through residential areas close to the port of Liverpool, to reduce the level of coal dust settling on people's homes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** This is an operational matter for British Rail.

I understand that the hon. Member has written to the BR chairman and that the chairman will be replying shortly.

## Rail Privatisation

**Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications for the re-opening of the Dunstable-Luton railway line for passenger traffic of the Government's policy for railway privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** We are considering the options for the re-opening of former passenger lines in the privatised railway.

## Public Transport (VAT)

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each EC nation, whether public transport fares are subject to VAT and at what rate; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir John Cope:** I have been asked to reply. The application of VAT to passenger transport services varies considerably across the European Community both in terms of modes of transport and types of journey. The table, based on a paper by the EC Commission, contains the most up-to-date information available.

*VAT percentage rates charged on passenger transport in the EC*

| | *National transport* | | | | | *International transport (taxation of national leg of journey)* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *M.S.* | *Air* | *Sea* | *Inland Waterways* | *Rail* | *Road* | *Air* | *Sea* | *Inland Waterways* | *Rail* | *Road* |
| Belgium | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | [1]6 flat-rate amounts |
| Denmark | exempt | exempt | exempt | [2]exempt | [2]exempt | 0 | 0 | — | exempt | [1]exempt/25/ flatrate amounts |
| Germany | 14 | 7 | [3]14/7 | [3]14/7 | [3]14/7 | 0 | 0 | [4]7/exempt | [3]14/7 | [1]14/7/flat-rate amounts |
| France | 5·5 | 5·5 | 5·5 | 5·5 | 5·5 | 0 | 0 | 5·5 | 0 | [5]5·5/exempt |
| Ireland | exempt | exempt | exempt | exempt | exempt | 0 | 0 | — | 0 | 0 |
| Italy | 19 | 9 | 19 | [6]9/exempt | [6]19/exempt | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Luxembourg | 6 | — | exempt | 6 | 6 | 0 | — | exempt | 0 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 6 | [7]6/exempt | [7]6/exempt | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| United Kingdom | [8]0 | [8]0 | [8]0 | [8]0 | [8]0 | 0 | 0 | — | 0 | 0 |
| Portugal | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [9]0 |
| Spain | 13 | 13 | 13 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 6 | 6 |
| Greece | [10]8 | [10]8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 | — | 0 | 8 |

[1] Generally flat-rate amounts are imposed upon entry into the country of foreign registered vehicles. A VAT rate is applied to national vehicles. The exemption existing in Denmark concerns all scheduled traffic, both national and foreign. In Germany, the rate of 7 per cent. is applied to short distances.
[2] Non-schedule traffic 25 per cent.
[3] Long-distance 14 per cent.—short distance 7 per cent.
[4] Exemption for ferries on Rhine, Danube, Oder and Neisse.

[5] Transit: exempt. Others: 5·5 per cent.
[6] Long distance 19 per cent. (9 per cent. for sea and rail transport). Urban transport: exempt.
[7] Ferries opting for taxation and scheduled boats: 6 per cent.
[8] Means of transport < 12 persons: 17·5 per cent.
[9] A special tax is collected at the frontier.
[10] 6 per cent. for transport within and between certain islands.

## EDUCATION

### Special Needs

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the effect of learning support assistance in the classroom on the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools.

**Mr. Forth:** Appropriate learning support may be of great benefit in assisting many children with special needs to take up places in mainstream schools. The Department has recently sponsored a comprehensive research project, carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research, into practical aspects of integration of children with special needs. The study is nearing completion, and when the final report is available I shall place a copy in the Library.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of children with statements of special need in nursery, primary and secondary sectors by local education authority in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Forth:** The numbers of pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1991 are shown in the table. Information for January 1992 is not available.

*Pupils with statements of special educational needs in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in each local educational authority in England January 1991*

| | Nursery | Primary | Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| City | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Camden | 0 | 89 | 94 |
| Greenwich | 1 | 192 | 171 |
| Hackney | 3 | 170 | 80 |
| Hammersmith | 4 | 78 | 54 |
| Islington | 2 | 179 | 63 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 1 | 31 | 20 |
| Lambeth | 1 | 223 | 95 |
| Lewisham | 0 | 102 | 129 |
| Southwark | 4 | 197 | 82 |
| Tower Hamlets | 0 | 94 | 61 |
| Wandsworth | 1 | 246 | 149 |
| Westminster | 1 | 53 | 62 |
| Barking | 0 | 94 | 50 |
| Barnet | 1 | 111 | 84 |
| Bexley | 2 | 172 | 137 |
| Brent | 0 | 59 | 70 |
| Bromley | 0 | 332 | 117 |
| Croydon | 0 | 163 | 169 |
| Ealing | 0 | 151 | 63 |
| Enfield | 0 | 17 | 17 |
| Haringey | 1 | 49 | 23 |
| Harrow | 0 | 164 | 113 |
| Havering | 0 | 178 | 83 |
| Hillingdon | 0 | 75 | 67 |
| Hounslow | 0 | 326 | 255 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 0 | 67 | 57 |
| Merton | 0 | 109 | 62 |
| Newham | 8 | 163 | 124 |
| Redbridge | 0 | 44 | 46 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0 | 105 | 85 |
| Sutton | 2 | 112 | 67 |
| Waltham Forest | 0 | 63 | 94 |
| Birmingham | 0 | 358 | 362 |
| Coventry | 0 | 77 | 80 |
| Dudley | 0 | 152 | 122 |
| Sandwell | 0 | 54 | 48 |
| Solihull | 0 | 146 | 163 |
| Walsall | 1 | 186 | 79 |
| Wolverhampton | 0 | 185 | 128 |
| Knowsley | 0 | 90 | 102 |
| Liverpool | 0 | 138 | 58 |
| St. Helens | 0 | 114 | 103 |
| Sefton | 0 | 182 | 168 |
| Wirral | 2 | 303 | 200 |
| Bolton | 3 | 99 | 98 |
| Bury | 1 | 251 | 198 |
| Manchester | 0 | 57 | 126 |
| Oldham | 0 | 230 | 194 |
| Rochdale | 5 | 134 | 119 |
| Salford | 0 | 91 | 50 |
| Stockport | 4 | 355 | 251 |
| Tameside | 0 | 272 | 125 |
| Trafford | 0 | 169 | 183 |
| Wigan | 0 | 278 | 168 |
| Barnsley | 1 | 161 | −80 |
| Doncaster | 0 | 101 | 97 |
| Rotherham | 1 | 189 | 63 |
| Sheffield | 1 | 296 | 270 |
| Bradford | 0 | 96 | 247 |
| Calderdale | 0 | 132 | 66 |
| Kirklees | 7 | 436 | 234 |
| Leeds | 1 | 585 | 989 |
| Wakefield | 4 | 127 | 69 |
| Gateshead | 0 | 40 | 54 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 5 | 142 | 168 |
| North Tyneside | 1 | 145 | 143 |
| South Tyneside | 0 | 96 | 74 |
| Sunderland | 1 | 162 | 121 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Avon | 4 | 541 | 515 |
| Bedfordshire | 4 | 277 | 344 |
| Berkshire | 4 | 473 | 178 |
| Buckinghamshire | 0 | 712 | 569 |
| Cambridgeshire | 7 | 495 | 417 |
| Cheshire | 3 | 1,207 | 1,123 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 481 | 470 |
| Cornwall | 2 | 850 | 725 |
| Cumbria | 6 | 606 | 516 |
| Derbyshire | 0 | 971 | 1,380 |
| Devon | 0 | 1,230 | 1,185 |
| Dorset | 0 | 171 | 413 |
| Durham | 43 | 409 | 205 |
| East Sussex | 5 | 93 | 63 |
| Essex | 1 | 791 | 919 |
| Gloucestershire | 0 | 178 | 193 |
| Hampshire | 1 | 1,145 | 961 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 0 | 210 | 174 |
| Hertfordshire | 5 | 789 | 680 |
| Humberside | 4 | 449 | 429 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 | 40 | 69 |
| Kent | 0 | 850 | 617 |
| Lancashire | 16 | 1,052 | 1,200 |
| Leicestershire | 0 | 651 | 543 |
| Lincolnshire | 8 | 465 | 577 |
| Norfolk | 5 | 1,001 | 766 |
| North Yorkshire | 3 | 557 | 446 |
| Northamptonshire | 4 | 277 | 304 |
| Northumberland | 0 | 171 | 188 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1 | 108 | 103 |
| Oxfordshire | 1 | 92 | 51 |
| Shropshire | 3 | 468 | 715 |
| Somerset | 0 | 305 | 475 |
| Staffordshire | 6 | 528 | 302 |

| | Nursery | Primary | Secondary |
|---|---|---|---|
| Suffolk | 0 | 592 | 1,042 |
| Surrey | 17 | 1,250 | 410 |
| Warwickshire | 1 | 238 | 136 |
| West Sussex | 0 | 198 | 184 |
| Wiltshire | 0 | 895 | 1,107 |
| England | 264 | 32,655 | 29,337 |

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average number of hours of learning support assistance available to each child with a statement of special need by local education authority in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not available centrally.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the weekly number of hours of learning support assistance in the classroom by local education authority in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not available centrally.

## School Places

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of additional school places which could be accommodated within existing school buildings in the vicinity of St. Ives and Huntingdon.

**Mr. Forth:** I understand that primary school capacity in St. Ives, derived from published admissions numbers, is 1,585 places. Numbers on roll are 1,496. The equivalent figures for secondary schools are 1,455 and 1,494 respectively. The figures for secondary schools exclude sixth form places and pupils. There are currently 288 students receiving post-16 education in schools in St. Ives.

There are 1,708 primary places in Huntingdon, and 1,469 pupils on roll; 2,444 secondary places are in use out of a total of 2,590; 447 students receive post-16 education in schools in Huntingdon.

## Teachers

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of teachers employed in the public sector on temporary contracts of service.

**Mr. Forth:** The table shows the numbers of qualified teachers in regular service in the maintained (including grant-maintained) nursery, primary and secondary sector in England in January 1992. All figures are provisional.

| | Full-time | Part-time |
|---|---|---|
| *Length of contract:* | | |
| Less than 1 year | 10,300 | 13,300 |
| 1 year or more | 9,000 | 15,000 |
| Permanent | 334,500 | 24,800 |
| All teachers | [1][2]353,900 | 53,100 |

[1] Due to rounding individual figures do not sum to the total.
[2] Excludes 500 full-time teachers on secondment for whom no contracts information is available.

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time teachers there are in employment.

**Mr. Forth:** Provisional figures for January 1992 indicate that there were 354,400 full-time qualified teachers in regular service in the maintained (including grant-maintained) nursery, primary and secondary sector in England.

## Local Management of Schools

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the local management of schools budget per head for each of the London boroughs that comprised the former Inner London education authority.

**Mr. Forth:** Apart from Westminster, inner London local education authorities did not operate local management of schools until April this year. The 1992-93 budget figures are not yet available, but I will write to the hon. Member when our analysis of the data is complete.

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the ratio of the relevant age-weightings used during 1991-92 in the local management of schools scheme of each of *(a)* Barking and Dagenham, *(b)* Barnet, *(c)* Bexley, *(d)* Brent, *(e)* Bromley, *(f)* Croydon, *(g)* Ealing, *(h)* Enfield *(i)* Haringey and *(j)* Harrow local education authorities expressing the ratio in six bands of pupil ages, for pupils aged under five years, pupils in each of the four key stages and sixth-form pupils, with pupils in key stages two representing one in each ratio.

**Mr. Forth:** Age weightings do not tell the whole story as these determine the distribution of just over half the total schools budget nationally. The table shows the relative age weightings applicable under the LMS schemes for the 10 local education authorities for which information was requested.

| | Barking | Barnet | Bexley | Brent | Bromley | Croydon | Ealing | Enfield | Haringey | Harrow |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under-fives | 1·37 | 1·09 | 1·13 | 1·28 | 1·39 | 1·38 | 1·08 | 1·14 | 1·63 | 1·50 |
| Key stage 1 | 1·02 | 1·02 | 1·00 | 1·04 | 1·06 | 1·05 | 0·84 | 1·01 | 1·00 | 1·20 |
| Key stage 2 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 | 1·00 |
| Key stage 3 | 1·25 | 1·41 | 1·30 | 1·43 | 1·43 | 1·56 | 1·23 | 1·36 | 1·33 | 1·33 |
| Key stage 4 | 1·78 | 1·41 | 1·55 | 1·72 | 1·75 | 1·66 | 1·43 | 1·71 | 1·50 | 1·55 |
| Sixth form | 2·47 | 2·33 | 2·10 | 2·46 | 2·81 | 2·42 | 1·54 | 2·17 | 2·06 | 2·27 |

*Notes:*

1. All the data is derived from the 1991-92 section 42 statements received from local education authorities.
2. The age-weightings were matched as close as possible to the relevant year groups within each Key Stage but due to the difference in definitions of year groups and age bands between different local education authorities a perfect match was not always possible. For each age group the relevant unit cost was taken and these were then averaged over the number of age groups within each Key Stage. The averages are simple arithmetic averages of the unit costs applied to the age groups. No account has been taken of the relative size of each age group.
3. The following assumptions have been made:

—under fives includes all age bands under five including nursery and reception classes;
—Key stage 1 includes ages 5 to 6 or years 1 to 2;
—Key stage 2 includes ages 7 to 10 or years 3 to 6;
—Key stage 3 includes ages 11 to 13 or years 7 to 9;
—Key stage 4 includes ages 14 to 15 or years 10 to 11; and
—Sixth form includes all aged 16 and over.

4. The figures in the table show the resultant average unit costs expressed as a ratio of the unit cost for Key stage 2.

## Language Schools

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has received for a system of registration for language schools.

**Mr. Forman:** My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time for the independent English language schools to be made subject to Government regulation. The Government believe that self-regulation in the independent sector provides the best means of ensuring that proper standards are maintained. The Government welcome the availability of voluntary accreditation schemes offered by the British Council and a number of responsible voluntary agencies.

## Physics Graduates

**Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the number of physics graduates in Britain *(a)* in 1983 and *(b)* in 1991; and what percentage these figures represent of the total number of graduates in each of these years.

**Mr. Forman:** Information is given in the table:

*Great Britain*[1]

| | *1983* | *Per cent.* | *1990* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physics graduates | 2,354 | 2·3 | 2,310 | 1·8 |
| Total numbers | 103,410 | 100 | 131,853 | 100 |

[1] Excludes graduates from higher education institutions in Northern Ireland.

## First Degree Students

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education in the most recent year for which figures are available, what was the public expenditure on the support of fees for full-time first degree students through *(a)* mandatory awards and *(b)* discretionary awards.

**Mr. Forman:** Expenditure by local education authorities in England and Wales on the support of fees for full-time first degree students through

*(a)* mandatory awards was £259·3 million in 1989-90, the most recent year for which figures are available.
*(b)* discretionary awards is not available centrally.

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education in the most recent year for which figures are available, what was the public expenditure on the support of fees for part-time first degree students through *(a)* the part-time fees support grant paid by the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and *(b)* through local education authority discretionary awards.

**Mr. Forman:** Public expenditure on the support of fees for part-time first degree students through

*(a)* the part-time fees support grant paid by the UFC in Great Britain for 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

| *1991-92 (provisional) £ million* | *1992-93 (provisional) £ million* |
|---|---|
| 6·9 | 7·4 |

*Source:* Universities Funding Council.
*Note:* Data are not available centrally on the PCFC.

*(b)* Data on discretionary awards paid to part-time first degree students are not available centrally.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department;

(2) what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol and hydrofluorocarbons;

(3) if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Forman:** Detailed information is not available but it is unlikely that any significant amounts of ozone-depleting chemicals have been used or purchased by this Department in the last three years. The Department's purchasing policy is based on the supply of goods and services which avoid the use of ozone-depleting substances wherever possible.

Less than one tonne of ozone-depleting chemicals are present mainly in the sealed air conditioning units at two of the Department's leased buildings. Chiller units are regularly maintained and monitored by PSA approved contractors to prevent any leakage to the atmosphere. Any chemicals requiring replacement will be re-cycled.

## School Inspections

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with Her Majesty's chief inspector on drawing up the guidance and criteria for school inspections; what statements of policy, directions or advice he has issued to Her Majesty's chief inspector; if he will place copies of these in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** Decisions on the arrangements for school inspections, including any guidance to registered inspectors, will be a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools to decide. While my right hon. Friend has discussed with Professor Sutherland his functions in general terms, he has issued no statements of policy, directions or advice.

### Arts and Drama

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students received discretionary awards from local education authorities for full-time courses in arts and drama in 1991-92; and if he will list the colleges and student numbers at each.

**Mr. Forman:** These data are not collected centrally.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### African National Congress

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish a training programme for the members of the African National Congress in *(a)* youth employment legislation, *(b)* economics and *(c)* civic government.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** ANC members have participated in several training programmes funded by Her Majesty's Government, including courses in economics, local government and, most recently, a course in public administration held earlier this year at the Civil Service college. We have offered further assistance in these and other areas. Our assistance is not focused solely on the ANC: we have also invited nominations from other political parties in South Africa, including Inkatha, the Pan-African Congress and the Azanian People's Organisation.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish scholarships for members of the African National Congress studying the social sciences.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Her Majesty's Government are providing scholarships for around 1,100 black South Africans in 1992. These are awarded to individuals irrespective of their political affiliation, but members of political organisations, including the African National Congress, are welcome to apply. The scholarship programme focuses primarily upon mathematics, education, commerce and the physical sciences, but awards are also made in other subject areas, including the social sciences.

### Polio

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government are committed to the eradication of polio by the World Health Organisation targeted year of 2000.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** Yes. This is one of a number of health targets established by the World Health Assembly which the British Government support.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase the amount of funding for polio eradication.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** ODA has provided £1 million between 1986-87 and 1990-91 for the "Polio Plus" campaign run by Rotary International. The United Kingdom also provides funds to polio and other immunisation programmes through our support for UNICEF, for WHO's expanded programme of immunisation (EPI) and for health care in our bilateral aid programmes. We will continue to provide support for activities to improve access to primary health care within developing countries—including immunisation—according to priorities agreed between national Governments, international agencies and ourselves.

### Earth Summit

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government had with the Commonwealth countries over a collective policy to be submitted to the United Nations conference on environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in June.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Prime Minister and other Commonwealth Heads of Government discussed the preparations for the United Nations conference on environment and development when they last met in Harare in October 1991. Their collective position was outlined in the final communiqué, copies of which have been deposited in the Libraries of the Houses.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the amount of tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Mellor:** The Department of National Heritage came into existence in April 1992 and figures for usage since that date are not available. My Department is committed to eliminating the use of these products as soon as it is practicable to do so.

### The Naze

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what calculation he has made about the length of time it will take before the current rate of erosion of the Naze at Walton on the Naze causes the Naze tower to fall into the North sea;

(2) if he will conduct a survey of the danger to the continued existence of the Naze tower, which now stands on the Naze at Walton on the Naze very close to the cliff edge, by the continuing erosion of the cliff edge; what he intends to do about the danger to the tower; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Curry:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him today by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

## SCOTLAND

### RENAVAL Programme

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the distribution of RENAVAL programme moneys on *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Fife.

**Mr. Allan Stewart:** The European Commission has approved European regional development fund (ERDF) awards under the RENAVAL community programme of some 21 million European currency units (MECU) (approximately £15 million) and 3·4 MECU (approximately £2·4 million) for Strathclyde and Fife respectively. The distribution of these monies is the responsibility of programme monitoring committees (PMC). To date, the Strathclyde PMC has approved ERDF grants to the value of some £1·5 million whilst the Fife PMC has approved ERDF grants totalling some £0·9 million.

### Education

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the amount of capital expenditure per pupil, per annum, in each Scottish region since 1979.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* The information requested is not available centrally.

### Secondary Education

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the amount of capital expenditure per capita, per annum, on secondary education in Scotland in each region, since 1979.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* The following table provides information on capital expenditure per pupil in local authority schools. It is derived from local authority capital expenditure returns and the annual school census of pupil numbers.

*Capital expenditure per pupil on local authority schools*

*(£ at out-turn prices)*

| | *1979-80* | *1980-81* | *1981-82* | *1982-83* | *1983-84* | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Borders | 31 | 60 | 54 | 39 | 44 | 58 | 69 | 57 | 64 | 72 | 109 | 215 |
| Central | 61 | 52 | 48 | 28 | 22 | 23 | 31 | 53 | 64 | 102 | 118 | 112 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 56 | 60 | 65 | 82 | 99 | 100 | 105 | 92 | 29 | 75 | 82 | 63 |
| Fife | 35 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 28 | 49 | 73 | 80 | 37 | 86 | 106 | 156 |
| Grampian | 79 | 102 | 140 | 103 | 80 | 72 | 103 | 101 | 29 | 44 | 52 | 76 |
| Highland | 60 | 69 | 86 | 77 | 46 | 23 | 38 | 32 | 73 | 107 | 116 | 92 |
| Lothian | 60 | 69 | 58 | 68 | 52 | 54 | 58 | 36 | 80 | 79 | 117 | 96 |
| Strathclyde | 36 | 41 | 53 | 44 | 48 | 50 | 52 | 46 | 54 | 69 | 74 | 66 |
| Tayside | 31 | 25 | 27 | 31 | 23 | 35 | 46 | 34 | 57 | 64 | 70 | 56 |
| Orkney | 44 | 27 | 175 | 353 | 263 | 388 | 370 | 282 | 310 | 327 | 314 | 406 |
| Shetland | 663 | 703 | 800 | 684 | 579 | 436 | 252 | 121 | 131 | 230 | 183 | 211 |
| Western Isles | 76 | 98 | 225 | 263 | 150 | 165 | 204 | 579 | 712 | 421 | 306 | 447 |

*Note:* The figures relate to expenditure on nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

### Birds

**Mr. Onslow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for licences to cull *(a)* cormorants and *(b)* goosanders and mergansers were submitted to his Department in each of the past five years; and how many of these were granted.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* The information is as follows:

| | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cormorants only | | | | | |
| applications | 6 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 12 |
| licences granted | 6 | 5 | 12 | 16 | 12 |
| Goosanders and/or mergansers only | | | | | |
| applications | 12 | 9 | 12 | 13 | 2 |
| licences granted | 12 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 2 |
| Both species | | | | | |
| applications | 23 | 23 | 18 | 32 | 20 |
| licences granted | 23 | 23 | 18 | 24 | 20 |
| Total number of applications submitted | 41 | 37 | 42 | 61 | 34 |
| Total number of licences granted | 41 | 37 | 42 | 50 | 34 |

### Set-aside Scheme

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of payments under the set-aside scheme in Scotland in each region which have been recovered or withheld in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* It is not yet possible to provide this information. Set-aside payments for 1991-92 will be made in the last quarter of 1992.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers have received payments under the set-aside scheme in 1991 in each region in Scotland for *(a)* horse-based activities, *(b)* golf courses, *(c)* game cover for recreational shoots, *(d)* sports grounds, *(e)* other recreational facilities and *(f)* other; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. The table lists all agreements under the non-agricultural use option of the set-aside scheme for those who entered the scheme in 1988, 1989 and 1990. No payments have yet been made to participants who entered the scheme in 1991.

*Payments for 1990-91 (set-aside agreements entered into in 1988,1989 and 1990)*

| *Region* | *(a)* | *(b)* | *(c)* | *(d)* | *(e)* | *(f)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Borders | 2 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Central | 1 | — | — | — | 2 | — |
| Dumfries and Galloway | — | 1 | — | — | — | 1 |
| Fife | 3 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Grampian | 29 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| Highland | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Lothian | 4 | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Strathclyde | 3 | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Tayside | 19 | 1 | 1 | — | — | — |
| Others | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 62 | 3 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 7 |

The information provided in respect of payments for the 1990-91 set-aside year (ending 30 September 1991) is provisional, pending completion of the processing of claims. As the scheme provides for five-year undertakings, the table above represents the cumulative position.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the figures in Scotland by region for 1991-92 of *(a)* the number of serious irregularities of the set-aside scheme, *(b)* the number of minor breaches of the scheme and *(c)* the number of cases where payments were withheld in full or in part; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* It is not yet possible to provide this information. The 1991-92 set-aside year runs from 1 October 1991 to 30 September 1992, with payments being made in the last quarter of 1992.

### Community Charge

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by local authority, the current percentage rate of community charge outstanding in respect of the uniform business rate.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* Figures showing the percentage of budgeted community charge income in respect of 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 received by each Scottish levying authority as at 31 March 1992 (the most recent date for which information is available) are given in the following table:

| *Levying authority* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Borders | 101·2 | 98·1 | 88·0 |
| Central | 96·2 | 90·9 | 86·1 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 99·6 | 100·0 | 90·1 |
| Fife | 97·6 | 92·8 | 85·5 |
| Grampian | 100·2 | 96·4 | 90·6 |
| Highland | 100·3 | 91·5 | 80·0 |
| Lothian | 88·4 | 81·2 | 72·3 |
| Strathclyde | 89·5 | 79·3 | 71·1 |
| Tayside | 97·0 | 87·1 | 79·4 |
| Orkney | 111·8 | 100·0 | 85·7 |
| Shetland | 100·0 | 95·0 | 85·7 |
| Western Isles | 90·3 | 86·1 | 68·8 |

The uniform business rate does not apply in Scotland and information about non-domestic rate collection levels is not held centrally.

## HEALTH

### Medical Records

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conclusions she has reached on the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Graham Gaskin for people seeking access to medical records compiled before 1 November 1991; and what action she intends to take.

**Mr. Sackville:** A consultation paper was issued to interested organisations in February 1992 to seek views on the implications of the judgment. Comments received are being analysed before any final decision is taken. At this stage it is not the Government's intention to apply the judgment to the disclosure of personal health records.

### Hospital Standards

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will establish a national inspectorate for health to review the standards in national health service hospitals.

**Mr. Sackville:** We have no plans to establish a national inspectorate for health.

Health authorities are already required to review and publish information about their performance against both national and local charter standards under the patients charter.

### Nurses

**Mrs Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the number of community nurses when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 comes into effect.

**Mr. Sackville:** District health authorities are working with social service departments to establish locally agreed strategies for the provision of community care. The resulting community care plans will include whether there is an additional need for services provided by community nurses, and this will be reflected in contracts for NHS care from next year.

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the public domain all records of her Department relating to the recruitment of black nurses to the national health service from Commonwealth countries.

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally. As from April 1991 NHS employing bodies are required to include in local planning data information about ethnic origin of all staff.

### Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the longest time that anyone who has been identified as suffering from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease has survived after the diagnosis has been made.

**Mr. Yeo:** The duration of illness in Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) may range from less than one month to many years. However, in the great majority of patients the duration of illness is measured in months and there has been no change in the average length of illness in CJD since 1970.

In the United Kingdom between 1985 and 1992 the longest duration of illness was 47 months. In 1979 a patient resident in England was reported to have a duration of illness of 60 months.

### Health Service Decisions

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of the sufficiency of the safeguards available to challenge the decision of a health authority that a change it proposes does not constitute a substantial variation in services;

(2) what plans she has to review the regulations governing the consultation of community health councils when substantial variations in health services are proposed.

**Mr. Sackville:** We are satisfied that the Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 304), as amended, contain adequate safeguards. There are no plans to review them at present.

### Organ Transplants

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the number of organs available for transplant.

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department maintains a continuous campaign to promote organ donation, which is a Government priority. We are mounting a seminar of all interested bodies in September to look at ways of improving donation rates.

### Population Statistics

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the estimated adult population in each borough in the West Midlands county for each year since 1983.

**Mr. Sackville:** Estimates of adult population relating to the years 1983-90 are shown in the table. These are based upon 1981 census results, with allowances for subsequent changes. Estimates relating to mid-1991, based upon results of the 1991 census, will become available in the autumn.

*Estimated resident population of the West Midlands (county) aged 18 and over*

*Thousands*

| *Area* | *1983* | *1984* | *1985* | *1986* | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Midlands | 1,977·5 | 1,981·6 | 1,987·2 | 1,987·8 | 1,989·1 | 1,988·9 | 1,993·1 | 1,994·3 |
| Birmingham | 752·5 | 753·1 | 753·6 | 752·5 | 749·5 | 746·9 | 746·8 | 746·4 |
| Coventry | 235·1 | 234·7 | 234·6 | 234·0 | 233·5 | 231·9 | 230·8 | 230·5 |
| Dudley | 227·6 | 229·0 | 230·6 | 231·9 | 234·5 | 236·9 | 238·8 | 240·3 |
| Sandwell | 229·3 | 229·0 | 229·1 | 228·4 | 227·3 | 226·4 | 226·6 | 226·5 |
| Solihull | 147·4 | 149·0 | 151·8 | 153·2 | 155·6 | 157·3 | 157·7 | 157·6 |
| Walsall | 196·9 | 197·7 | 197·8 | 198·1 | 199·0 | 200·1 | 201·9 | 202·5 |
| Wolverhampton | 188·6 | 189·0 | 189·6 | 189·6 | 189·6 | 189·5 | 190·6 | 190·5 |

*Note:* Figures may not add due to rounding.
*Source:* Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

### National Health Service Staff

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants and administrators work for the national health service.

**Mr. Sackville:** At 30 September 1990 (the latest detailed information available) there were 120,040 whole-time equivalent[1] national health service staff employed on the terms and conditions of the national health service Administrative and Clerical Staffs Whitley Council in England. These include a wide range from clerical and secretarial to senior finance, information technology and personnel staff and over a quarter work in direct support of clinicians. At the same date, there were 9,680 whole-time equivalent national health service general and senior managers.

Additionally there are currently 60 civil servants working on secondment in the national health service.

The Department of Health currently employs 4,773 staff.

[1] Whole-time equivalents are calculated as the number of whole-time staff plus total hours or sessions per week contracted by part-time staff divided by the number of hours or sessions in the appropriate standard working week.

### Dentists

**Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of dentists in each family health services authority area who have withdrawn from the NHS in each year since October 1990.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is not available. Since 30 September 1990 there has been a net increase of 52 in the number of dentists practising in the general dental services in England. The number of dentists on the dental list of each family health services authority at 30 September 1990, 30 September 1991 and 31 March 1992 (the latest available figures) is shown in the table.

*Number of general dental practitioners*
*England*

| *Family health services authority* | *1990 30 September* | *1991 30 September* | *1992 31 March* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cleveland | 155 | 167 | 172 |
| Cumbria | 145 | 148 | 148 |
| Durham | 144 | 146 | 146 |
| Northumberland | 87 | 89 | 82 |
| Gateshead | 58 | 63 | 65 |
| Newcastle-upon-Tyne | 106 | 97 | 102 |
| North Tyneside | 65 | 58 | 63 |
| South Tyneside | 39 | 44 | 44 |
| Sunderland | 70 | 69 | 75 |
| Humberside | 204 | 198 | 207 |
| North Yorkshire | 241 | 243 | 247 |
| Bradford | 153 | 146 | 142 |
| Calderdale | 53 | 58 | 58 |
| Kirklees | 104 | 111 | 115 |
| Leeds | 254 | 255 | 255 |
| Wakefield | 85 | 81 | 78 |
| Derbyshire | 242 | 250 | 255 |
| Leicestershire | 237 | 233 | 235 |
| Lincolnshire | 114 | 124 | 123 |
| Nottinghamshire | 265 | 267 | 277 |
| Barnsley | 53 | 54 | 59 |
| Doncaster | 80 | 88 | 90 |
| Rotherham | 61 | 66 | 64 |
| Sheffield | 166 | 175 | 170 |
| Cambridgeshire | 186 | 183 | 175 |
| Norfolk | 222 | 224 | 223 |
| Suffolk | 197 | 197 | 193 |
| Bedfordshire | 132 | 140 | 139 |
| Hertfordshire | 393 | 400 | 388 |
| Barnet | 161 | 145 | 142 |
| Brent and Harrow | 188 | 187 | 190 |
| Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow | 257 | 248 | 257 |
| Hillingdon | 84 | 77 | 79 |
| Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster | 297 | 239 | 228 |
| Essex | 418 | 441 | 435 |
| Barking and Havering | 94 | 107 | 96 |
| Camden and Islington | 190 | 176 | 170 |
| City and East London | 189 | 173 | 180 |
| Enfield and Haringey | 192 | 180 | 177 |
| Redbridge and Waltham Forest | 143 | 145 | 155 |
| East Sussex | 278 | 276 | 278 |
| Kent | 519 | 510 | 496 |
| Greenwich and Bexley | 140 | 147 | 149 |
| Bromley | 125 | 128 | 125 |
| Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham | 279 | 273 | 276 |
| Surrey | 446 | 453 | 453 |
| West Sussex | 284 | 285 | 285 |
| Croydon | 127 | 122 | 125 |
| Kingston and Richmond | 137 | 140 | 131 |
| Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth | 246 | 242 | 248 |
| Dorset | 230 | 227 | 233 |
| Hampshire | 506 | 509 | 512 |
| Wiltshire | 165 | 158 | 169 |
| Isle of Wight | 48 | 45 | 46 |
| Berkshire | 249 | 256 | 256 |
| Buckinghamshire | 226 | 229 | 232 |
| Northamptonshire | 150 | 144 | 141 |
| Oxfordshire | 201 | 199 | 193 |
| Avon | 355 | 359 | 363 |
| Cornwall and Isles of Scilly | 143 | 141 | 142 |
| Devon | 369 | 371 | 369 |
| Gloucestershire | 195 | 194 | 204 |
| Somerset | 147 | 152 | 150 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 197 | 202 | 208 |
| Salop | 127 | 128 | 127 |
| Staffordshire | 244 | 246 | 245 |
| Warwickshire | 134 | 131 | 135 |
| Birmingham | 299 | 292 | 301 |
| Coventry | 81 | 74 | 79 |
| Dudley | 78 | 75 | 79 |
| Sandwell | 67 | 69 | 67 |
| Solihull | 51 | 59 | 55 |
| Walsall | 59 | 58 | 60 |
| Wolverhampton | 58 | 62 | 62 |
| Cheshire | 324 | 322 | 325 |

| Family health services authority | 1990 30 September | 1991 30 September | 1992 31 March |
|---|---|---|---|
| Liverpool | 146 | 146 | 146 |
| St. Helens and Knowsley | 94 | 89 | 87 |
| Sefton | 82 | 90 | 91 |
| Wirral | 118 | 118 | 117 |
| Lancashire | 400 | 414 | 422 |
| Bolton | 65 | 71 | 71 |
| Bury | 65 | 59 | 59 |
| Manchester | 179 | 178 | 181 |
| Oldham | 62 | 68 | 69 |
| Rochdale | 54 | 52 | 57 |
| Salford | 68 | 62 | 64 |
| Stockport | 111 | 106 | 109 |
| Tameside | 60 | 55 | 63 |
| Trafford | 82 | 82 | 88 |
| Wigan | 86 | 91 | 90 |
| Total | 15,480 | 15,451 | 15,532 |

## Female Psychiatric Patients

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make it her policy that female psychiatric patients are given a choice as to whether they are cared for in a women-only or mixed ward;

(2) how many health authorities offer women the choice of being admitted to a women-only psychiatric ward.

**Mr. Yeo:** Decisions on the hospital ward accommodation of psychiatric patients are matters for local clinical and managerial judgment, taking into account the patient's wishes. Information on the number of health authorities offering women the choice of being admitted to a women-only psychiatric ward is not collected centrally.

## Electors

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total number of electors registered in each parliamentary constituency in the West Midlands county *(a)* on the current electoral register and *(b)* on the registers in force for each of the years from 1983 to 1991.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is shown in the table.

*Parliamentary electors registered in each constituency in the West Midlands (county). 1983-87*

| Parliamentary constituency | | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aldridge-Brownhills | BC | 61,714 | 61,955 | 62,192 | 62,540 | 62,984 |
| Birmingham, Edgbaston | BC | 55,503 | 55,477 | 55,386 | 54,929 | 54,797 |
| Birmingham, Erdington | BC | 56,561 | 55,972 | 55,405 | 55,089 | 54,597 |
| Birmingham, Hall Green | BC | 61,712 | 61,880 | 61,744 | 61,838 | 61,666 |
| Birmingham, Hodge Hill | BC | 61,895 | 61,518 | 61,220 | 60,611 | 59,785 |
| Birmingham, Ladywood | BC | 61,006 | 60,588 | 60,225 | 60,227 | 59,286 |
| Birmingham, Northfield | BC | 75,151 | 75,164 | 74,931 | 74,641 | 73,956 |
| Birmingham, Perry Barr | BC | 75,149 | 75,091 | 75,047 | 74,825 | 74,413 |
| Birmingham, Selly Oak | BC | 72,390 | 72,490 | 72,409 | 72,686 | 72,821 |
| Birmingham, Small Heath | BC | 59,916 | 59,783 | 58,714 | 58,225 | 57,253 |
| Birmingham, Sparkbrook | BC | 54,155 | 53,632 | 53,395 | 53,438 | 53,594 |
| Birmingham, Yardley | BC | 58,346 | 58,229 | 57,923 | 57,889 | 57,423 |
| Coventry, North-East | BC | 67,609 | 68,045 | 68,075 | 68,094 | 68,291 |
| Coventry, North-West | BC | 52,541 | 53,271 | 53,069 | 53,171 | 53,703 |
| Coventry, South-East | BC | 52,989 | 52,662 | 52,361 | 51,897 | 52,476 |
| Coventry, South-West | BC | 65,735 | 65,571 | 65,684 | 65,750 | 66,364 |
| Dudley, East | BC | 75,718 | 75,788 | 75,896 | 75,932 | 76,154 |
| Dudley, West | BC | 78,890 | 79,912 | 80,941 | 81,817 | 82,884 |
| Halesowen and Stourbridge | BC | 77,385 | 77,729 | 77,857 | 78,252 | 78,979 |
| Meriden | CC | 75,212 | 76,582 | 77,663 | 78,611 | 79,436 |
| Solihull | BC | 74,556 | 75,069 | 76,148 | 77,474 | 78,855 |
| Sutton Coldfield | BC | 68,617 | 70,030 | 71,258 | 72,442 | 73,128 |
| Walsall, North | BC | 69,805 | 69,847 | 69,884 | 69,469 | 69,306 |
| Walsall, South | BC | 68,097 | 68,144 | 68,046 | 67,990 | 67,659 |
| Warley, East | BC | 58,255 | 57,845 | 57,404 | 56,756 | 56,365 |
| Warley, West | BC | 57,910 | 58,110 | 58,263 | 58,332 | 58,240 |
| West Bromwich, East | BC | 60,265 | 60,105 | 59,793 | 59,490 | 58,993 |
| West Bromwich, West | BC | 59,124 | 59,408 | 59,482 | 59,543 | 59,705 |
| Wolverhampton, North-East | BC | 64,493 | 64,760 | 64,312 | 64,308 | 64,237 |
| Wolverhampton, South-East | BC | 57,039 | 56,900 | 55,996 | 56,637 | 56,404 |
| Wolverhampton, South-West | BC | 69,576 | 69,271 | 69,427 | 68,867 | 69,303 |
| Total | | 2,007,314 | 2,010,828 | 2,010,150 | 2,011,770 | 2,013,057 |

*Notes:*
The figures in this table are those supplied by electoral registration officers at the times when the registers come in to use each year.
BC—borough constituency: CC—county constituency.
*Source:* Population Estimates Unit. OPCS.

*Parliamentary electors registered in each constituency in the West Midlands (County) 1988-92.*

| *Parliamentary constituency* | | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aldridge-Brownhills | BC | 63,119 | 63,481 | 64,249 | 64,066 | 64,166 |
| Birmingham-Edgbaston | BC | 54,609 | 54,162 | 53,691 | 53,601 | 53,529 |
| Birmingham, Erdington | BC | 53,991 | 53,552 | 53,477 | 53,265 | 52,848 |
| Birmingham, Hall Green | BC | 61,702 | 61,501 | 61,225 | 61,007 | 60,792 |
| Birmingham, Hodge Hill | BC | 59,446 | 59,149 | 58,935 | 58,438 | 58,239 |
| Birmingham, Ladywood | BC | 58,746 | 56,737 | 56,288 | 57,398 | 57,607 |
| Birmingham, Northfield | BC | 73,316 | 72,403 | 72,249 | 71,866 | 71,260 |
| Birmingham, Perry Barr | BC | 74,399 | 74,053 | 73,318 | 73,567 | 72,817 |
| Birmingham, Selly Oak | BC | 72,596 | 72,099 | 72,220 | 72,907 | 72,817 |
| Birmingham, Small Heath | BC | 56,505 | 54,631 | 54,522 | 55,514 | 55,852 |
| Birmingham, Sparkbrook | BC | 53,327 | 51,788 | 51,323 | 51,832 | 52,261 |
| Birmingham, Yardley | BC | 56,883 | 56,664 | 56,438 | 55,609 | 55,265 |
| Coventry North East | BC | 67,478 | 66,464 | 66,283 | 65,460 | 65,450 |
| Coventry North West | BC | 53,504 | 52,665 | 51,954 | 51,429 | 51,166 |
| Coventry South East | BC | 51,651 | 50,333 | 49,985 | 49,246 | 49,249 |
| Coventry South West | BC | 66,283 | 65,311 | 64,781 | 64,606 | 64,196 |
| Dudley East | BC | 76,010 | 75,927 | 76,341 | 76,147 | 76,148 |
| Dudley West | BC | 84,329 | 85,955 | 87,155 | 87,425 | 87,633 |
| Halesowen and Stourbridge | BC | 79,378 | 79,279 | 79,350 | 78,657 | 78,535 |
| Meriden | CC | 79,755 | 79,181 | 78,808 | 78,196 | 77,742 |
| Solihull | BC | 79,283 | 79,223 | 78,402 | 78,097 | 78,028 |
| Sutton Coldfield | BC | 73,617 | 73,387 | 72,829 | 72,494 | 72,333 |
| Walsall North | BC | 69,147 | 69,731 | 69,699 | 70,057 | 70,406 |
| Walsall South | BC | 67,484 | 66,790 | 66,288 | 66,338 | 66,422 |
| Warley East | BC | 55,421 | 54,491 | 53,709 | 52,762 | 52,267 |
| Warley West | BC | 58,050 | 58,083 | 58,340 | 58,025 | 57,785 |
| West Bromwich East | BC | 58,704 | 58,339 | 58,433 | 57,983 | 57,604 |
| West Bromwich West | BC | 59,364 | 59,144 | 59,016 | 58,484 | 58,348 |
| Wolverhampton North East | BC | 63,697 | 60,596 | 62,621 | 63,389 | 63,301 |
| Wolverhampton South East | BC | 55,853 | 55,561 | 56,047 | 56,921 | 56,789 |
| Wolverhampton South West | BC | 68,151 | 65,503 | 66,539 | 67,353 | 68,029 |
| TOTAL | | 2,005,798 | 1,986,183 | 1,984,515 | 1,982,139 | 1,978,839 |

*Note:* The figures in this table are those supplied by Electoral Registration Officers at the times when the registers come into use each year.
BC—borough constituency: CC—county constituency.
*Source:* Population Estimates Unit. OPCS.

## Food Safety Act 1990

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that disabled people or people who have experienced serious injury or illness are not precluded from the therapeutic and rehabilitative benefit of participation in catering and domestic tasks in residential homes as a result of the application of regulations consequent on the Food Safety Act 1990.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 19 June at column *708*.

## Home Helps

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will initiate a feasibility study into the possibility of local housewives and mothers being employed as home helps for the elderly in their communities; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. Yeo:** Home help staff make up about a quarter of the total work force of social services departments in England. The majority of this valuable work force are women with family commitments. We do not consider that a feasibility study is necessary.

## Community Support Schemes

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the number of community support schemes there are in existence;

(2) what guidelines are issued for the operation of community support schemes.

**Mr. Yeo:** Guidance on implementing "Caring for People" includes material specifically on services for carers. We are funding the Carers Impact Group which will provide a consultancy service to statutory authorities about how to support carers, we also gave financial assistance to the King's Fund for their publication "Focus on Carers". Information about the number of community support schemes is not collected centrally.

## White Paper

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish her White Paper on the health of the nation.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) on 16 June at column *472*.

### National Health Service Trusts

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will seek a report from the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority as to how much the trust applicants within the Wakefield health authority have so far spent on *(a)* press advertisements regarding trust proposals and *(b)* publicising the consultation meetings regarding the trust proposals.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Regional health authorities are responsible for co-ordinating the consultation process with the individual trust applicants and the financial details are a matter for them. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact Sir Bryan Askew, Chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority, for details.

### Ophthalmology

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has received from the regional health authority on (i) a unified ophthalmology centre in Newcastle upon Tyne and (ii) a cataract centre in the Northern region; on what date her Department asked for the advice of the regional health authority on these proposals; and when she proposes to announce her decision.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In January 1992, the national health service management executive asked Northern regional health authority to make recommendations to my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State concerning the siting of a unified ophthalmology service in Newcastle. The recommendation is for unification of services at the Royal Victoria Infirmary. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering the recommendation and will announce her decision shortly. Advice was not sought from Northern regional health authority on provision of a cataract centre. The regional health authority was asked to take its siting into consideration when making its ophthalmology recommendation.

### Registered Homes Act 1984

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since the implementation of the Registered Homes Act 1984 the number of appeals to registered home tribunals by *(a)* private nursing homes, *(b)* voluntary nursing homes, *(c)* private residential care homes, *(d)* voluntary residential care homes, *(e)* dual registered private homes and *(f)* dual registered voluntary homes, stating in each category for each year (i) the reason for the appeal to the tribunal and (ii) the number of appeals which were successful.

**Mr. Yeo:** The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Immune Deficiency

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will grant supra-regional funds status for severe combined immune deficiency syndrome work with children at the Newcastle general hospital.

**Mr. Yeo:** The Government receive advice on such questions from the supra-regional services advisory group. I understand that the advisory group is considering an application for the designation of the service for the treatment of severe combined immunodeficiency and related disorders provided by Newcastle general hospital, and will make its recommendation later in the year.

### Residential Homes

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance she proposes to give to local authorities on how to deal, under the new community care arrangements, with cases where elderly residents in private residential or nursing homes who are self-financed exhaust their resources and are unable to continue paying their own fees.

**Mr. Yeo:** People who are already resident in residential care and nursing homes when the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 takes full effect next April will have preserved rights to income support under the present system. This applies whether they are currently self-financing or not. They will continue to be able to turn to the Department of Social Security for public financial support.

People who enter residential care and nursing homes on a self-financing basis on or after the date the Act takes effect and subsequently exhaust their own financial resources will be able to approach local authorities. The local authority would then undertake an assessment of their care needs. We have issued extensive guidance on care management and assessment which covers all new cases seeking public support after April 1993.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Parliamentary Questions

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will review the amount of paper used in answering hon. Members' questions.

**The Prime Minister:** There are no specific proposals to review the amount of paper used but, like all stationery items, Government Departments aim to keep costs to a minimum and cut out waste wherever possible.

### Earth Summit

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will arrange for the deposition in the Library of copies of the texts of *(a)* the Rio declaration on sustainable development, *(b)* the intergovernmental declaration on the management of forests, *(c)* the full text of agenda 21 blueprint for environmental action, *(d)* the biodiversity convention and *(e)* the climate convention as agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to the hon. Member for Roxborough and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 17 June 1992, *Official Report*, col. *362*.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will set out those issues that Her Majesty's Government pressed to be omitted from the final text of the agenda 21 document as a pre-condition of signing it at the Earth summit in Rio de Janeiro.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government fully supported the Agenda 21 action plan and did not press for any issues to be omitted before agreeing the final text.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to consult non-governmental organisations in Her Majesty's Government's preparation of proposals for the Sustainable Development Commission agreed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, prior to their submission for consideration at the United Nations General Assembly in the autumn.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government consulted non-governmental organisations on a wide range of environment and development issues before the Earth summit and will continue to do so during the follow-up. As I announced in Rio, the United Kingdom will convene, next June, a major international forum of the non-governmental community to examine and clarify their role in the practical implementation of Agenda 21.

### Darwin Initiative

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his statement of 15 June, *Official Report*, column 649, what additional resources Her Majesty's Government plan to make available to support his Darwin initiative on natural resources, research and monitoring, the compilation of inventories on important species, and the promotion of international co-operation and techniques for conservation respectively.

**The Prime Minister:** We are still considering the level of resources which will be required.

### Maastricht Treaty

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the subjects on which *(a)* majority voting and *(b)* qualified majority voting are allowed under the Maastricht agreement.

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 20 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *168-69*. Where no specific voting rule is stated (e.g. for procedural issues), the residual rule of simple majority applies, by virtue of article 148(1) of the treaty of Rome.

### Colombia

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his statement of 15 June, *Official Report*, column 650, what assistance has been provided to Colombia to aid the fight against drug trafficking; what information he has on the number of people killed in Colombia in the course of suppressing that traffic; and what consideration he gave to the levels of killings when deciding on the level of financial assistance.

**The Prime Minister:** As indicated in the *Official Report* of 15 June 1992, column 650 we have provided a substantial package of anti-drugs assistance to the judicial and law-enforcement authorities in Colombia. The only accurate figure for the number of people killed in Colombia in the course of suppressing drugs trafficking is the number of anti-narcotics police officers lost, which for 1991 was 35. In deciding on the level of financial assistance, our first consideration has been support for the democratically elected government of Colombia in their fight to maintain the rule of law.

### Global Forum

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what additional resources Her Majesty's Government have earmarked for supporting the global forum of non-governmental organisations and aid agencies in 1993.

**The Prime Minister:** The Government are currently assessing the cost of supporting the proposed conference and we will be making provision for this in our plans for the next financial year.

### Global Environmental Facility

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans Her Majesty's Government have to report to Parliament on the ways in which the global environmental facility will spend the £100 million which the United Kingdom is to contribute.

**The Prime Minister:** The Overseas Development Administration will continue to report on its global environmental assistance programme, through which our contributions to the global environmental facility are made, in the annual Foreign and Commonwealth Office departmental report.

### Value Added Tax

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether the Government intend to challenge the decision of the European Court on the imposition of VAT on spectacles, hearing aids and dentures.

**The Prime Minister:** No. There is no right of appeal against a judgment of the European Court. The court found in February 1988 that the United Kingdom, in exempting supplies of spectacles and hearing aids (not dentures), had contravened article 13 of the EC Sixth VAT Directive. As a result of the judgment, the VAT Act 1983 was amended by section 13 of the Finance Act 1988 with effect from 1 September 1988.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Company Directors

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to control payments and remunerations made to company directors.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** At present the details of directors' service contracts over one year are, with some exceptions, required under the Companies Act 1985 to be made available for inspection by shareholders who may ask questions or put forward resolutions on directors' pay at the annual general meeting. Also, directors' service contracts for a period of five years or more are subject to approval by general meeting.

### United Nations

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the United Nations conference on trade and development following the decision to establish the new United Nations Sustainable Development Commission.

**Mr. Needham:** The Government welcome the agreement at the eighth UN conference on trade and development in Cartagena in February this year, that UNCTAD should be radically reformed so that it can carry out its role to help promote sustained and sustainable economic development more effectively.

If UNCTAD's reforms are to be effective, its work should not duplicate but should complement the activities of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Commission, once this body's role is agreed by the UN General Assembly meeting this autumn.

### Environmental Incentives

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to launch a research programme on incentives to industry to meet environmental standards which would consider the application of *(a)* charges, *(b)* resource taxes, *(c)* tradeable permits, *(d)* subsidies and *(e)* performance bonds.

**Mr. Leigh:** The White Paper on the Environment, "This Common Inheritance", contains a commitment to a programme of research into the potential use of market-based instruments as a means of environmental protection. This work falls to several Departments. An important example of current work is the study which my Department has commissioned jointly with the Department of the Environment of the role economic instruments might play in helping us to achieve our recycling targets.

### Lean-burn Engines

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage the development of lean-burn engines.

**Mr. Leigh:** The Department is not currently supporting the development of lean-burn engines. However, technologies across the range of approaches leading to reduced vehicle emission, including leanburn engines, are eligible for support, subject to meeting the support criteria.

### Financing Schemes

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to outlaw off-balance-sheet financing schemes.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The Companies Act 1989 extended the definition of a subsidiary undertaking and has resulted in the bringing on to consolidated balance sheets some schemes which were previously off-balance sheet. I have no plans for further statutory provisions. However, the Accounting Standards Board is working towards an accounting standard on the matter.

### Supervisory Bodies

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation under which shareholders will be able to seek damages from the recognised supervisory bodies in respect of the audit failures identified in the DTI inspectors' reports.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will establish an independent statutory body to hear complaints against the bodies recognised as the recognised supervisory bodies in the Companies Act 1989.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to introduce legislation to require that completed ballot papers for elections of the officers to the recognised supervisory bodies are not returned to the secretaries of those bodies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have no such plans.

### Liability

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to provide a statutory definition of liability.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

### Expense (Statutory Definition)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to provide a statutory definition of expense.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

### Independent Ombudsman

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for appointing an independent ombudsman to hear complaints against the recognised qualifying bodies by the students of that body.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I see no need for such proposals.

### Accounting Standards

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to prevent partners from the accountancy firms criticised by his Department's inspectors from having a seat on the Accounting Standards Board.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Appointments to the Accounting Standards Board are a matter for the Financial Reporting Council.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the costs of his Department's investigations which he has recovered under section 439 of the Companies Act 1985 from the auditing firms criticised in the inspectors' reports.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend has no powers under section 439 to require those criticised in an inspectors' report to contribute to the cost of the investigation.

### Audits

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to abolish audits for small companies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have at present nothing to add to the statement made by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) on 18 February 1992, *Official Report*, columns *122-25*.

### Company Investigations

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of company investigations authorised under the various sections of the Companies Act 1985 for the year ended 31 March.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Information on the number of Companies Act investigations, by section, is to be published in the companies annual report. The table gives the number of investigations under the Companies Act in the year ending 31 March 1992.

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Section 432 | 4 |
| Section 442 | 3 |
| Section 446 | 1 |
| Section 447 | 155 |
| Total | 163 |

### Mountleigh Property Group

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will appoint inspectors to investigate the collapse of Mountleigh Property Group.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** It is not my Department's policy to comment on individual companies.

If the hon. Member has information to suggest that the appointment of inspectors is appropriate, my officials will consider it if the hon. Member forwards it in the usual manner.

### Company Receivers

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will launch an independent investigation into ways in which company receivers are appointed.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

### Companies Act Inspectors

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list showing the names and business connections of the individuals who are currently acting as inspectors in connection with the investigations authorised under the Companies Act 1985.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

D. Donaldson, QC.
I. Watt, FCA of KPMG Peat Marwick, Chartered Accountants.
Miss, E. Appelby, QC.
P. Foss, FCA of Moores Rowland, Chartered Accountants.
L. Ziman of Nabarro Nathanson, Solicitors.
W. Hoffman, FCA of Baker Tilly, Chartered Accountants.
P. Heslop, QC.
R. Lewis, FCA of Kidsons Impey, Chartered Accountants.
D. A. Evans, QC.
B. Worth, FCA of Clark Whitehill, Chartered Accountants.
E. W. Hamilton, QC.
J. A. Scott, FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered Accountants.
C. P. F. Rimer, QC.
J. White, FCA of KPMG Peat Marwick, Chartered Accountants.
W. M. Gage, QC.
A. H. Gilroy, FCA of BDO Binder Hamlyn, Chartered Accountants.
R. G. B. McCombe, QC.
J. K. Heywood, LLB, FCA of Price Waterhouse, Chartered Accountants.
P. H. Bovey of DTI.
M. A. Pickford of Government Actuary's Department.
A. R. Fausset of DTI.
D. G. Dean, FCCA of DTI.
A. H. S. Robertshaw of DTI.
C. K. B. Mayhew of DTI.
M. Crystal, QC.
V. B. A. Temple, Barrister.
D. L. Spence of Grant Thornton, Chartered Accountants.
R. J. L. Thomas, QC.
R. T. Turner, FCA of Neville Russell, Chartered Accountants.

### Bryanston (Inspectors' Report)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will publish the inspectors' final report on Bryanston.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

### Recreational Craft

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what barriers to trade, within the European Economic Community for recreational craft of between 2·5 and 24 m length for use on inland waterways or coastal waters, have been identified by the European Commission which are associated with draft directive 6119/92 concerning the removal of any such barriers.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The barriers to trade identified by the European Community Commission are the technical rules for type approval under national legislation applying in France and Italy.

### Magnox Nuclear Power Stations

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the age of each of the Magnox nuclear power stations; and at what age each of the stations will be decommissioned.

**Mr. Eggar:** Nuclear Electric's seven operating Magnox stations first produced power in the following years:

| | *Year* |
|---|---|
| Bradwell | 1962 |
| Dungeness A | 1965 |
| Hinckley Point A | 1965 |
| Trawsfynydd | 1965 |
| Sizewell A | 1965 |
| Oldbury | 1967 |
| Wylfa | 1971 |

A further Magnox station at Berkeley is currently being decommissioned.

The date at which any operating Magnox station will be decommissioned is a commercial matter for Nuclear Electric plc, subject to the views of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish an independent assessment of the safety and life expectancy of the Magnox reactors.

**Mr. Eggar:** I understand that is the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) normal practice to publish the

independent nuclear installations inspectorate's (NII) findings of its assessment of operators' long term safety reviews (LTSRs) of Magnox nuclear power stations. The NII's findings on the LTSRs for Berkeley, Bradwell, Calderhall, Chapel Cross, Hinkley Point A, and Hunterston A have been published. The HSE propose to publish the NII's findings on the LTSRs for Dungeness A, Oldbury, Sizewell A, Traswfynydd, and Wylfa in due course.

## Nuclear Safety

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what or whose expert advice decisions on the safety of nuclear power operations are made.

**Mr. Eggar:** The nuclear installations inspectorate, which is part of the Health and Safety Executive, regulate the safety of nuclear installations by virtue of powers contained in the Health and Safety At Work etc Act 1974 and relevant statutory provisions of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

## Net Book Agreement

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what calculations he has made of the economic effects to public libraries of the abolition of the net book agreement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Figures are not available. In 1991 expenditure on books and pamphlets by United Kingdom public libraries was £101 million and this figure includes a 10 per cent. discount on net books under the library licence which is a part of the NBA.

## Assistance Programmes

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure of his Department's programmes of assistance to industry broken down by programme and cross-referenced for standard regions, showing Greater London as a separate region, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The information sought is not available except at disproportionate cost. However, a breakdown by region of expenditure on the Department of Trade and Industry's programmes of regional assistance to industry and for other industrial support under the Industrial Development Act 1982, including the consultancy initiatives, is provided in the appendices to the Industrial Development Act 1982 annual reports. Total expenditure on each of the Department's programmes is shown in the annual appropriation accounts.

## Regional Offices

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure showing the running costs of each regional office of his Department and the cost of running sub-regional offices aggregated by region, and with Greater London shown separately, and excluding the funding programmes operated by the offices for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The information requested is shown in the following table. Greater London is part of the south east region. No separate figures for Greater London are available.

*Department of Trade and Industry regional office running costs*
*£ Thousands*

| | 1987-88 | | 1988-89 | | 1989-90 | | 1990-91 | | 1991-92 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Current prices | 1987-88 prices[1] | Current prices | 1987-88 prices[1] | Current prices | 1987-88 prices[1] | Current prices | 1987-88 prices[1] | Current prices | 1987-88 prices[1] |
| North East | 2,727 | 2,727 | 3,250 | 3,032 | 3,412 | 2,990 | 4,246 | 3,431 | 4,420 | 3,338 |
| North West | 2,758 | 2,758 | 3,686 | 3,439 | 3,633 | 3,184 | 3,609 | 2,916 | 3,997 | 3,018 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1,600 | 1,600 | 2,098 | 1,957 | 2,300 | 2,016 | 2,686 | 2,170 | 2,863 | 2,162 |
| East Midlands | 1,115 | 1,115 | 1,432 | 1,336 | 1,599 | 1,401 | 1,728 | 1,396 | 1,865 | 1,408 |
| West Midlands | 2,043 | 2,043 | 2,572 | 2,400 | 2,951 | 2,586 | 3,133 | 2,531 | 3,705 | 2,798 |
| South West | 1,011 | 1,011 | 1,390 | 1,297 | 1,461 | 1,280 | 1,616 | 1,306 | 1,804 | 1,362 |
| South East | 1,389 | 1,389 | 2,429 | 2,266 | 2,663 | 2,334 | 2,876 | 2,324 | 3,221 | 2,432 |
| East[2] | — | — | — | — | 391 | 343 | 1,124 | 908 | 1,423 | 1,075 |

[1] Deflated by the public spending plans GDP deflator.
[2] The East region was created during 1989-90 by splitting off the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk from the South East region.

## Assisted Areas

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what proportion of Great Britain's working population live in the current assisted areas; and what changes he envisages in this figure as a result of his recently announced review;

(2) what percentage of the current assisted areas are *(a)* development areas and *(b)* intermediate areas; and what changes he envisages in this split as a result of his recently announced review.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Under the current assisted areas map of Great Britain, 42 (13 per cent. by number) of the 322 travel-to-work areas have development area status, 56 (17·4 per cent.) have intermediate area status, and 1 (0·3 per cent.) is part intermediate area and part non assisted area. In working population terms, approximately 15 per cent. have development area status and a further 20 per cent. have intermediate area status.

The consultation paper we have issued made it clear that the coverage of the assisted areas is unlikely to increase. We have not decided, in advance of representations received under the consultation arrangements, the precise extent of the new map or the split between the two categories. These will in due course have to be agreed with the European Commission.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure on regional financial assistance to each development area and

intermediate area in the Northern region in each year since the last revision of the assisted areas held in 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Expenditure on regional financial assistance in the Northern region broken down into development areas and intermediate areas from 1984-85 at current prices and at 1984-85 prices is set out in the following table. The schemes covered in the table are regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants. A more detailed breakdown by assisted area is available only at disproportionate cost.

*Regional Financial Assistance*

| | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Northern region at current prices* | | | | | | | | |
| DA | 106·1 | 84·4 | 116·0 | 84·2 | 113·8 | 97·6 | 63·4 | 45·3 |
| IA | 1·1 | 1·1 | 4·4 | 2·5 | 3·6 | 2·2 | 3·3 | 1·2 |
| *Northern region at 1984-85 prices* | | | | | | | | |
| DA | 106·1 | 79·9 | 106·4 | 73·27 | 92·4 | 74·3 | 44·6 | 29·8 |
| IA | 1·1 | 1·0 | 4·0 | 2·2 | 2·9 | 1·7 | 2·3 | 0·8 |

*Notes:*
1. The table comprises expenditure on Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants.
2. The Northern Region is defined as the area covered by the North East and Cumbria.

## Uranium

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what applications he has received to import highly enriched uranium fuel from Iraq to Dounreay.

**Mr. Eggar:** None. AEA Technology and British Nuclear Fuels plc are awaiting the decision of the International Atomic Energy Agency as to whether their services will be required.

## Plutonium

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out his estimate of the plutonium stockpile under safeguards that will be loaded at United Kingdom nuclear facilities in *(a)* 1995, *(b)* 2000 and *(c)* 2005; and whether such estimates are made available to the European Commission.

**Mr. Eggar:** Projections for loadings of plutonium fuels into United Kingdom power stations are a matter for the generating companies as owners of the stations.

## Walls Ice Cream Company

**Mr. Martlew:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer the Walls Ice Cream Company to the Office of Fair Trading in respect of its policy on the use of freezers loaned to retailers for Walls' products.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I understand that the Director General of Fair Trading is considering representations made about this matter, following which he will decide what action if any he should take. The present inquiries do not constitute a statutory investigation and will not end in a report.

## Renaval Programme

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the distribution of Renaval programme moneys in terms of *(a)* regions assisted, *(b)* projects receiving financial support, *(c)* amounts given by Her Majesty's Government to regions and projects and *(d)* matching funds provided by local authorities.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The table shows the amount allocated from European regional development fund to each Renaval programme and the total grant so far committed in each programme. The award of grants to projects is a matter for the programme monitoring committees.

Co-funding of the non-grant element of project costs may be from central Government, local authorities or other sources.

*Distribution of Renaval programme grant*

| *Programme* | *Allocation ERDF grant £ million* | *Value of grant so far approved £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| Plymouth | 10·7 | 1·3 |
| Tyne and Wear | 23·0 | 13·0 |
| Middlesbrough and Langbaurgh (Cleveland) | 4·3 | 1·2 |
| Wirral and Sefton (Merseyside) | 5·6 | — |
| Fife | 2·4 | 0·9 |
| Strathclyde | 15·0 | 1·5 |
| TOTAL | 61·0 | 17·9 |

## Astra Holdings plc

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *126*, whether the DTI inspectors' inquiry into Astra Holdings plc will include the trading relationship between Astra and Allivane.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The inspectors have not yet submitted their report, and it is not appropriate to disclose details of particular investigations.

## Car Prices

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set up a study of on the road car prices of every make and model in the United Kingdom and, compared like with like, in each other EC country; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton** *[holding answer 18 June 1992]:* Full and reliable international comparisons of car prices are complex and resource-intensive exercises. I am not convinced that there is a case for setting up further studies of car prices so soon after those recently undertaken by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the European Commission which, between them, covered the ground in considerable detail. However, I welcome the indications

from United Kingdom car companies that they will cooperate with initiatives proposed by the EC Commission for greater transparency in their prices, to the benefit of consumers.

## WALES

### Local Authority Boundaries

13. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the secretary of State for Wales if it is his intention to base the boundaries of the new Welsh local authorities on existing district council boundaries.

**Mr. David Hunt:** It was, but I have now agreed to consider views on whether that approach should be modified in particular cases.

### Rural Homelessness

14. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he yet has figures for rural homelessness in *(a)* Clwyd, South-West and *(b)* Wales as a whole.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Data on homelessness is available on a district basis and is published annually in the Welsh Housing Statistics.

### Grant Aid

15. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much grant aid was received in Wales in total during 1990 and 1991.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Total expenditure within my responsibility for 1990-91 was £4,437 million. The estimated outturn for 1991-92 is £5,286 million.

### Further Education Funding

16. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future funding of further education colleges in Wales.

17. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made towards establishing a further education funding council for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** From 1 April 1993 the funding of further education will be the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council for Wales. I announced the names of the members of the funding council on 21 May and on 27 May my right hon. Friend issued a letter of guidance to the funding council, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Housing Renovation Grants

18. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the expenditure on housing renovation grants in the public sector in Wales in 1991-92; what is his estimate of corresponding expenditure in 1992-93; and what is his assessment of the effect of changes in the regulations for such grants on the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of disabled people in their area.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Data on renovation grants for public sector tenants are not held centrally. There have been no changes in the regulations affecting disabled facilities grants.

### Health Funding

19. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will be having further discussions with the chairmen of area health authorities in Wales about funding.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** My right hon. Friend and I will next meet chairmen on 7 July. I understand, however, that the question of funding has not been raised as a specific item for discussion.

### Business

20. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry in Wales about the outlook for business in Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I met representatives of the CBI in Wales on 1 June. I was very pleased that the CBI's latest monthly survey shows 46 per cent. of firms in Wales expecting to show an increase in output during the next quarter. This is an increase on the 34 per cent. showing an improvement in orders recorded in the four months to April and it is all the more significant when compared to figures for the UK as a whole of 31 per cent. and 22 per cent. respectively. This is extremely encouraging for the business community in Wales and is further evidence that Wales can lead the UK out of recession.

### Tourism

21. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the value of Welsh tourism in 1992.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Figures for 1992 are not yet available but in 1991, despite a difficult economic climate, the tourism industry showed considerable resilience. There was an estimated increase of 5 per cent. in the number of tourism trips taken in Wales by United Kingdom residents compared with 1990, while expenditure by domestic tourists remained unchanged at £900 million at current prices.

### Acidification

22. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to deal with the problems of acidification in upland Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Government's approach to acidification is set out in the Environment White Paper, "This Common Inheritance". The Welsh Office is playing a full part in the development of policies to tackle the problem as well as funding relevant research.

### National Parks

23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy on the creation of further national parks in Wales.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** The responsibility for designating national parks in Wales rests with the Countryside Council for Wales, although such designations require confirmation by my right hon. Friend. There are no orders relating to new national parks currently before my right hon. Friend but any such proposal would be considered on its own merits.

### Sports Hall, Llanrwst

24. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when a decision on the application by Aberconwy borough council for grant assistance under the Welsh Office rural initiative grant scheme for a sports hall at Llanrwst is going to be made.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Allocations of the balance of funding available under the 1992-93 round of the rural initiative capital grants scheme were announced on 5 June 1992. I am pleased to confirm that phase 1 of the Llanrwst sports hall project has been allocated £424,260.

### RECHAR

25. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much European Community money he expects to come to Wales during the 1992-93 financial year from its RECHAR programme.

**Mr. David Hunt:** It is too soon to estimate how much of the £20·7 million made available to south Wales will be allocated in the current financial year. Invitations have been issued to all potential sponsors to put forward projects to take up the available resources, but the deadline for receipt of these bids has not yet been reached.

### Roads Investment

26. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of investment in roads in Wales in 1979; and what it is at the present time.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Gross expenditure by central Government on motorways and trunk roads in Wales in 1979-80 was £75 million. Provision for 1992-93 is £197 million. These figures include capital grants, road safety, traffic census and other miscellaneous expenditure.

Total expenditure on local roads in 1979-80 was £102·7 million. Provisional expenditure in 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available, was £252·2 million.

### NHS Trusts

27. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he has received from hospitals in Wales for opting out of the present arrangements in order to form trusts.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** National health service trusts are, and will remain, an integral part of the national health service. To date, 14 health service units in Wales have formally applied to become national health service trusts in April 1993. As the House will be aware, I have already announced details on the applications received together with the timetable for statutory public consultation. Decisions on the applications are expected in the autumn.

### Community Hospital, West Môn

28. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made to establish a community hospital in west Môn.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The latest information provided by Gwynedd district health authority envisages advance site works commencing early in 1993. Funding for this new community hospital has been provided in the major capital building programme.

### Orimulsion

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) for what reasons the publication of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's report on burning orimulsion at Pembroke has been delayed from its planned publication date of 29 May;

(2) when the report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on the proposed burning of orimulsion at Pembroke power station will be published.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I understand Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution requires additional information from National Power to assist it in determining the company's application. The company has agreed to extend the determination period until 30 September.

### Housing

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the housing stock owned by the Development Board for Rural Wales.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I hope to be in a position to lay draft regulations to govern disposal of the Development Board for Rural Wales housing stock before the House shortly.

### Psychotherapy

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the provision of psychotherapy services which are available on the national health service in Gwynedd.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Psychotherapy is a recognised form of therapy practised by professional disciplines in the mental health field, and is, therefore, available as part of the NHS general psychiatric services in Gwynedd.

### Brynglas Tunnels Road

**Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit the site of the Brynglas Tunnels road relief scheme to meet residents and their representatives.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present. However, as with all our trunk road schemes, the resident engineer and the Welsh Office remain available to deal with matters raised by residents and the representatives.

### Pensioner Travel Passes

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to require local authorities in Wales to issue pensioners with free passes for public transport; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** None; this is a matter for local authorities to decide.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which local authorities in Wales issue free passes for public transport to pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** Bus passes are available in Cardiff to enable persons over 75 to travel free.

Rhuddlan borough council provide a bus service which is free to pensioners holding concessionary passes.

### Residential Homes

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the number of non-registered residential homes for the elderly *(a)* in Wales, *(b)* in each county in Wales and *(c)* in each district in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information on non-registered residential homes is not held centrally.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that residents are not denied the therapeutic and rehabilitative benefit of participation in catering and domestic tasks in residential homes for elderly people in Wales as a result of the application of regulations consequent on the Food Safety Act 1990.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The Food Safety Act does not prohibit anyone in residential or sheltered accommodation from preparing their own meals or beverages. However, the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, as amended, set out the controls necessary for the hygienic preparation of food other than in domestic settings. Environmental health departments advise on controls bearing in mind the nature of any food safety risk, including the type of food handled and the preparation involved. Residents may assist staff in the kitchen if the hygiene controls can be satisfied.

### Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol and HCFC.

**Mr. David Hunt:** My Department follows the advice on government procurement policy set out in Her Majesty's Treasury publication, "Public Purchasing Policy: Consolidated Guidelines" and also the Environmental Action Guide issued by the Department of the Environment.

I expect this Department to cease using substances controlled by the Montreal protocol by the dates agreed internationally under the protocol.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. David Hunt:** This information is not available.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. David Hunt:** Industry and local authorities are encouraged to recycle CFCs and halons. The recovery and elimination of ozone-depleting substances will feature in the programme of the Network of Environmental Managers in Wales which is to be launched in July.

### Housing, Pantasaph

**Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received over the proposal to build 53 homes in Pantasaph, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received 14 representations either objecting to the proposal or asking him to call the application in for his own determination.

These have been carefully considered, but my right hon. Friend concluded that the issues do not warrant taking the matter out of the hands of the local planning authority.

### Cardiff Bay Barrage

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales further to the letter of the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of 13 December 1990, a copy of which was placed in the Library, what is the latest estimate available to him of the outturn cost of constructing the proposed Cardiff Bay barrage on a comparable basis with the £147·7 million referred to in page 5 of that letter.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The latest estimate of the cost of all elements included in the £147·7 million—that is construction of the barrage and associated works (including the Wentloog lagoon), acquisition of land and rights and protective provisions for groundwater and water quality—is the total of £152·5 million (at 1991-92 prices) included in the financial memorandum to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill introduced in November 1991.

### Flint Bypass

**Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the proposed inland route for the Flint bypass; and if he will make a statement.

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters. This is a county road scheme and is the responsibility of Clwyd county council as the local highway authority.

### Local Government Reform

**Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he has made in the matter of reforming local government in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. David Hunt:** I set out my proposals for a single tier of unitary authorities for Wales in a statement to the House on 3 March. These are now the subject of consultation. The closing date for submission of comments is 30 June.

### Community Charge

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the moneys so far unpaid on the community charge.

**Mr. David Hunt** *[holding answer 19 June]:* Local authorities reported that at 31 March 1991 arrears of

community charges in Wales were £49 million. Returns from local authorities relating to the position at 31 March 1992 are still incomplete.

## DEFENCE

### Bases (Leasing)

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask them Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those bases and facilities operated or leased by United States armed forces that have been returned to his Department's control in the last five years giving the date of transfer for each base and facility.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The list of those bases and facilities where the United States visiting forces no longer have a presence and which have been returned to Ministry of Defence control in the last five years is as follows:

| *Location* | *Type of facility* | *Return date* |
|---|---|---|
| RAF Wethersfield | Standby Deployment Base | October 1990 |
| RAF Hullavington | Storage Facility | September 1991 |
| RAF Chessington | Contingency Wartime Hospital | September 1991 |
| RAF Kirknewton | Contingency Wartime Hospital | September 1991 |
| RAF Lanark | Contingency Wartime Hospital | December 1991 |
| Greatworth | Communications Site | February 1992 |
| Great Bromley | Communications Site | May 1992 |

In addition, RAF Abingdon and RAF Brawdy are no longer available as collocated operating bases for United States forces in wartime.

### Public Record Office

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many papers have been withdrawn from the Public Record Office by his Department in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Figures for retrievals over the past 5 years cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

The Ministry of Defence, in common with all other Government Departments, has a statutory right, under the Public Records Acts, to retrieve its records from the Public Record Office. Records which are in the public domain, but on loan to the MOD, are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed, but well-established procedures also exist for the earlier return of those records which are the subject of urgent access requests from the public.

### Housing Rights

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the rights to housing of soldiers in *(a)* the British Army and *(b)* each of the armies of the other NATO member states.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** All serving regular members of the British Army are entitled, as part of their conditions of service, to public accommodation for themselves, and if married, their families. This applies to all personnel enlisted for worldwide service, but will not apply to personnel whose service is limited to Northern Ireland under the terms of the Army Act 1992 which comes into effect from 1 July 1992. Such personnel will continue to live in their own homes. The policies of other NATO member states are a matter for those countries.

### RAF Greenham Common

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Greenham Common.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The United States department of defence announced on 30 January 1992 the decision to withdraw from RAF Greenham Common in autumn 1992 returning the station to full Ministry of Defence control. Work is continuing to establish whether there is a further defence use for RAF Greenham Common.

### Spandau Prison

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now make public all papers relating to the British administration of Spandau prison.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** In the time available, we have been unable to locate any Ministry of Defence records relating to the administration of Spandau prison. The prison was administered under four-power (British/US/French/Soviet) control and any surviving quadrupartite records are the responsibility of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

### Lord Aldington

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether access was allowed to Lord Aldington or his representatives to papers held by his Department that are not accessible in the Public Record Office for preparation of his court case; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Lord Aldington saw a number of open files in the MOD whch had been borrowed from the Public Record Office. Records on loan to the MOD are returned as soon as departmental action has been completed, but well-established procedures also exist for the earlier return of those records which are the subject of urgent access requests from the public. Lord Aldington was also, as is the right of any former serviceman, given information on request from his own Service Record held in confidence by MOD. Other than this information from his service record, Lord Aldington was neither given information nor saw any files which were then or are now closed to the public.

### Agencies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the first degree obtained by each of the chief executives of the Duke of York's royal military school, the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation and the Queen Victoria school; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** This is a matter for the chief executives of the agencies. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum salary payable, including

performance-related element, and the length of time of the contract of each of the chief executives of the Duke of York's royal military school, the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation and the Queen Victoria school.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The head of the Duke of York's Royal Military school is a serving colonel and the maximum salary payable to him is £47,577. The present head was appointed for a term of five years which ends this year; his successor will also serve for a five-year term. The chief executive of the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation is a serving captain RN and the maximum salary payable to him is £42,358. He was appointed early this year and is expected to serve three years in the post. The head of the Queen Victoria school is entitled to a maximum salary of £38,902. He is aged 56 and his normal retiring age is 65. None of the chief executive appointments currently attracts performance-related pay.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Duke of York's royal military school, the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation and the Queen Victoria school as agencies; and whether the cost was borne by the parent Department or the new agency in each case.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** This is a matter for the chief executives of the agencies. I have asked them to write to the hon. Member.

## Collaborative Procurement

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proposals he has for further collaborative procurement projects with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation;

(2) if he will list the procurement projects in which the United Kingdom is currently collaborating with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation;

(3) if he will list the procurement projects in which the United Kingdom is currently collaborating with countries other than those who are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

**Mr. Aitken:** Those collaborative projects currently being undertaken by the United Kingdom both with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and with other countries, including those in service, production, development or at earlier study phases are as follows:

WITH MEMBERS OF NATO

*In production or service*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Naval equipment* | *Other participants* |
| Sea Gnat Decoy System | Denmark, United States |
| NATO Ships Inertial Navigation System | Canada, Netherlands, Spain |
| *Land equipment* | |
| FH70 Howitzer | Germany, Italy |
| M483A1 Artillery Shell | Netherlands, Turkey, United States |
| Scorpion Reconnaissance Vehicle | Belgium |
| Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase I | France, Germany, Italy, United States |
| Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase II | Germany |
| *Missiles* | |
| Martel Air-to-Surface | France |
| Sidewinder Air-to-Air | Germany, Italy, Norway |
| Milan Anti-Tank (including improvements) | France, Germany |
| *Air systems* | |
| Jaguar | France |
| Lynx | France |
| Puma | France |
| Gazelle | France |
| | *Other participants* |
| Tornado | Germany, Italy |
| Harrier AV8B/GRS | United States |
| Joint Tactical Information Distribution System | United States |
| *Other equipment* | |
| Navstar Global Positioning System (GPS) | Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, United States |
| Midge Drone | Canada, Germany |

IN DEVELOPMENT OR EARLIER STUDY PHASES

| | |
|---|---|
| *Naval equipment* | *Other participants* |
| The Future Frigate | France |
| Surface Ship Torpedo Defence System | United States |
| NATO Improved Link Eleven | Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, United States |
| *Land equipment* | |
| COBRA (Counter Battery Radar) | France, Germany |
| Multiple-Launch Rocket System Phase III | France, Germany, United States |
| Aimed Control Effect Anti-Tank Mine | France, Germany |
| Future Tank Main Armament | France, Germany, United States |
| Electro-magnetic Launcher | United States |
| *Missiles* | |
| TRIGAT (Third Generation Anti-Tank Guided Weapon) | Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands |
| | *Other particiants* |
| Family of Anti-Air Missile Systems | France Italy |
| *Air Systems* | |
| Airborne Radar Demonstrator System | France, United States |

| | |
|---|---|
| European Fighter Aircraft | Germany, Italy, Spain |
| EH101 Helicopter | Italy |
| RTM322 Helicopter Engine | France |
| Allied Standards Avionics Architecture Initiative | France, Germany, United States |
| *Other equipment* | |
| NIS Question & Answer | France, Germany, Italy, United States |
| Component Development | |
| ADA Computer Language Project Support Environment | Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United States |
| Universal Modem for Satellite Communications | United States |
| Allied Data Systems Interoperability Agency NATO Procedural Interoperability Standards | France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, United States |
| Stand-off Radar Programme of Studies | United States |
| WITH OTHER COUNTRIES | |
| *In service* | |
| Barra Sonobuoy | Australia |

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Aitken:** Figures for the amount of ozone-depleting substances procured and used by the Ministry of Defence in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 are not readily available and it would require disproportionate time and effort to assemble them. This also applies to estimates of usage for the next year and to how many months supply have been ordered by the Department. The first phase of a procurement monitoring exercise to establish a baseline will be completed mid/late 1992. The current holding of ozone-depleting substances is estimated to be 2,000 tonnes.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol and hydrofluorocarbons.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is our policy to monitor the procurement of all ozone-depleting chemicals contained in articles to be supplied against contract. This procurement will be reduced in line with percentage reductions prescribed by the Montreal protocol. Release to atmosphere of all ozone depleting substances, including HCFCs, is restricted to operational emergency use only.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Aitken:** It is our policy to recover ozone-depleting substances from service equipments and installations during maintenance or at end of service life. The substances are then recycled.

## Amritsar Massacre

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now release all papers concerning the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Amritsar on 13 April 1919.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** All official papers relating to the Amritsar massacre on 13 April 1919 have been available to the public since 1968 and are currently held at the Oriental and Indian Office collection of the British Library.

## Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what technical capacity the United Kingdom possesses to dismantle nuclear depth charges and free-fall nuclear bombs; and what are his Department's plans to store or dispose of the nuclear materials recovered from dismantled warheads.

**Mr. Aitken:** The United Kingdom has the appropriate expertise and facilities for dismantling United Kingdom nuclear weapons withdrawn from service. It is not in the national interest to give details of the processes involved as they are classified.

## Prisoners of War

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information Her Majesty's Government have received from the authorities of the former Soviet union about British prisoners of war moved to Russia during or at the end of the Korean war.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now declassify all documents relating to British prisoners of war in Korea.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** Most contemporary records dealing with this subject are already open in the Public Record Office. A very small number of files continues to be properly witheld from the public domain under the criteria of the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. The personal service records of all servicemen from this period are retained in the Ministry of Defence. Information from these records is available on request to the serviceman concerned or his proven next of kin.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make representations to the authorities of the former Soviet Union about allowing the Commonwealth War Graves Commission access to the records and sites of camps in Russia where British prisoners of war are believed to have been held.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for the graves of British and Commonwealth Service personnel from the first and second World Wars, but not the Korean war. If any definite evidence is received that graves of British service personnel have been found in Russian, appropriate action will be taken.

### Rescue Co-ordination Centre

**Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the rescue co-ordination centre of RAF Pitreavie.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The RAF is reviewing its arrangements for the co-ordination of rescues, but no final decisions have been taken.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Countryside Premium

**Mr. Temple-Morris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to extend eligibility for the countryside premium to the set-aside scheme to all counties in England and Wales.

**Mr. Curry:** We plan to introduce a national successor to the countryside premium scheme once we have the necessary legal powers to do so. The agri-environment proposals agreed in principle last month as part of the CAP reform package should provide that legal basis. We aim to submit proposals next year for a programme of agri-environmental measures, including an environmental set-aside scheme, to the EC Commission for its approval.

### Water Management

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers his Department has in respect of water resource management; if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to enhance those powers; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Curry:** Responsibility for water resource management rests with the National Rivers Authority and the Secretary of State for the Environment under the Water Resources Act 1991. We are in close touch with both on questions of water resource management for agriculture and horticulture.

### Common Agricultural Policy

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any plans have been made to help Cheshire farmers adjust to the cuts in support under the CAP reforms.

**Mr. Curry:** While the overall level of support to procedures has been reduced, in most sectors cuts in price have been accompanied by the introduction of, or increases in, direct payments to farmers. These will help farmers throughout the United Kingdom to adjust to the new arrangements.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the projections on which the expected reduction in the cost of the common agricultural policy is based including indications of timing and the amount of increase and decrease in food purchases and European Community budget, respectively;

(2) if he will publish a table showing for each of the next five years the range of estimated expenditure on the common agricultural policy, showing that part which is estimated to arise from the recently announced measures and which constitute additional expenditure, together with any estimated reductions for those and succeeding years up to the estimated reduction of £8,000 million per year.

**Mr. Curry:** Commissions estimates of expenditure under the common agricultural policy for the next five years are as follows:

| *Year* | *£ billion* |
|---|---|
| 1993 | 23·6 |
| 1994 | 25·3 |
| 1995 | 26·5 |
| 1996 | 27·5 |
| 1997 | 27·1 |

These figures take account of the effect on the EC budget of the measures agreed in the reform package including the accompanying measures. They assume that in other respects patterns of production and trade remain unaltered.

It is not possible to give estimates of expenditure on individual commodities, as a number of details remain to be decided. However, it is expected that there will be additional expenditure on direct aids for arable producers, higher beef premia and the accompanying measures, and savings on intervention and/or export refunds for cereals, beef, butter, pigment and poultry products. There will also be savings in the tobacco sector.

The additional cost to the EC budget of the reform measures will be offset by savings to consumers. The figure of £8,000m to which the hon. Member refers is a broad estimate of the extent to which consumers' expenditure on food will be lower than otherwise when the effects of the agreement have fully worked through, assuming patterns of consumption remain unchanged. It reflects the support price reductions agreed for beef, butter and cereals and a number of assumptions about the impact on market prices: some of the effects are expected to be evident in 1993 and the rest should have worked through by 1997.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the expenditure by the EC on agriculture in each of the most recent annual periods for which figures are available; and what estimates have been made for expenditure in 1992 and 1993.

**Mr. Curry:** The information requested is in the table. There are as yet no published figures available for 1993.

| | *EC expenditure on Agriculture (£ million)* |
|---|---|
| 1988 | 19,563 |
| 1989 | 17,855 |
| 1990 | 20,147 |
| 1991 | 24,105 |
| 1992 | 26,463 |

*Sources:* 1988-90: budget outturn; 1991: provisional outturn; 1992: budget.

## Whaling

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent meetings he has had with representatives of groups regarding the forthcoming International Whaling Commission meeting; what was the outcome of the meetings; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** I had a very helpful meeting on 10 June with the cetacean group of Wildlife Link to discuss our approach to the next meeting of the IWC. I made it clear that we will not contemplate any lifting of the present moratorium on commercial whaling, of which we have been a leading advocate, because present evidence suggests that whales cannot be taken in an acceptable and humane manner; because we have to be assured that any revised management procedures include proper enforcement and monitoring; and because we must be sure that whale stocks are at healthy levels. I and my officials look forward to working closely with Wildlife Link on these and other points.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the international forums at which he has raised the issue of commercial whaling; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** I attended and opened the 39th annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Bournemouth in 1987 and have also made clear the Government's views about whaling in statements made on my behalf at the commission meetings in New Zealand in 1988, in the Netherlands in 1990 and in Iceland in 1991. I plan to open the 44th meeting of the International Whaling Commission in Glasgow on 29 June.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria he uses to establish whether a whale stock is healthy; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** Responsibility for advising on the states of whale stocks and the impact of catches on them is a matter for the scientific committee of the International Whaling Commission. These are matters currently being addressed by the committee meeting in Glasgow and we look forward to receiving their advice. I have made clear elsewhere the reasons why we cannot contemplate any lifting of the present moratorium on commercial whaling.

## Potato Marketing

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantity of potatoes in weight and percentage terms of the United Kingdom market are imported *(a)* in total and *(b)* in processed form.

**Mr. Curry:** Potato imports into the United Kingdom over the past five years were:

| | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *[1] 1991* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* Total imports ('000 tonnes) | 985·00 | 947·00 | 1,005·00 | 897·00 | 907·00 |
| Percentage of United Kingdom total usage | 13·39 | 12·40 | 13·38 | 12·52 | 12·65 |
| *Of which:* | | | | | |
| *(b)* Processed imports ('000 tonnes raw equivalent) | 394·00 | 488·00 | 543·00 | 521·00 | 557·00 |
| Percentage of United Kingdom total usage | 5·36 | 6·39 | 7·23 | 7·27 | 7·75 |

[1] Provisional.

## The Naze

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the current role of his Ministry in preventing the erosion of the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze;

(2) by what date he expects to have reached conclusions about providing funds to prevent erosion of the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze.

**Mr. Curry:** The Coast Protection Act 1949 empowers maritime district councils to carry out works to protect land from erosion and encroachment by the sea. Proposed schemes must be submitted to the Department for approval. To qualify for approval and for grant aid from the Department, schemes must be technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable.

The Department has been awaiting the submission of further documentation from Tendring district council as regards the economic justification for the proposed scheme to reduce the rate of erosion at the Naze. This has now been received. We hope to be able to reach a decision shortly.

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what estimate he has made of the costs of schemes to prevent the erosion of the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze;

(2) if he will set out the method of analysis his Ministry is applying in attempting to calculate the economic benefits which would arise from preventing futher erosion of the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze.

**Mr. Curry:** Coast protection authorities are responsible for estimating the costs and benefits of proposed coastal works which are put to the Department for approval and for grant aid, in conformity with project appraisal guidance issued by the Department. In the case of Walton-on-the-Naze, it is for Tendring district council, the responsible authority, to assess relevant costs and benefits. The Department will then consider whether the proposal is economically worthwhile, using best available techniques for quantification of the expected benefits from the scheme.

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on how many occasions in the last two years Ministers from his Ministry have visited the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze;

(2) if he will list the meetings which his Ministry has had and the bodies concerned, over the last two years, on the subject of the erosion of the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze.

**Mr. Curry:** Ministers from the Department have not visited the Naze in an official capacity in the past two

years. During that period Ministry officials have met representatives of Tendring district council on five occasions.

**Mr. Sproat:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the extent to which the Naze at Walton-on-the-Naze has eroded over the last 12 months.

**Mr. Curry:** Erosion at the Naze is being monitored by Tendring district council, the responsible coast protection authority. Their latest report is that on average some 1·76 metres has been eroded along the length of the Naze in the past 12 months.

The rate of future erosion will depend upon weather, wave and ground conditions and so cannot be predicted with certainty. Current estimates are that if no further coast protection works are carried out, the Naze tower will probably be lost in around 26 to 30 years time. Tendring district council has submitted a proposal to the Department for approval and for grant aid for works which would slow the rate of erosion at this site and so could delay loss of the tower until around 40 to 50 years from now.

## Cereals

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is his intention that the intervention standard for cereals will be based on the existing feed wheat criteria.

**Mr. Curry:** No decision has yet been taken on the quality standards that will apply for intervention but the Council has asked the Commission to bring forward proposals. In the negotiations, we shall be seeking an outcome that takes account of the importance of feed wheat in the United Kingdom.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will exercise the regional base area for cereals, as distinct from imposing farm quotas.

**Mr. Curry:** Yes. The United Kingdom will not exercise the option of imposing individual farm quotas. We will publish details of the regional base areas as soon as possible.

## Early Retirement

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will apply the early retirement scheme so as to ease the structural changes which will follow the CAP reforms.

**Mr. Curry:** The scheme is primarily designed to amalgamate farms in those member states with large numbers of very small holdings. It is not relevant to United Kingdom conditions, where the average farm is already five times larger than in the EC as a whole.

## Agencies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of Agricultural Development Advisory Service and the Central Science Laboratory as agencies; and whether the cost was borne by the parent Department or the new agency.

**Mr. Curry:** As the launch of ADAS and the Central Science Laboratory coincided with the run-up to the general election, events and publicity surrounding the launch were scaled-down and involved minimal costs. Both agencies are highlighting their change in status in the course of their normal working and promotional programmes.

## Beef Special Premium

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is his intention to set individual reference quantities for the beef special premium.

**Mr. Curry:** Although the option exists for the setting of individual quotas for the beef special premium rather than apply a generalised regional ceiling, I do not at present intend to take up this option. Before making a final decision, industry representatives will be consulted.

## Agri-environment Programme

**Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that the provisions of the EC environmental directives will be met under the agri-environment programme.

**Mr. Curry:** In preparing our proposals to implement the new agri-environment regulation we will take account of relevant EC environmental directives.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Curry:** Data on amounts and use of ozone-depleting chemicals could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling ozone-depleting chemicals;

(2) what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol, and hydrofluorocarbons.

**Mr. Curry:** The Department is currently preparing an environmental strategy which will contain an environmental policy statement and a plan for environmental action. This strategy is expected to include policy and an action plan on ozone-depleting substances. The Department plans to have this strategy in place by December 1992.

## Rabies

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *121*, if he will now publish the EC scientific veterinary committee's report on the control of rabies.

**Mr. Gummer:** I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

## Quarantine

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the groups of mammals from schedule 1 to the Rabies (Importation of Dogs, Cats, and other Mammals) Order 1974 which will be exempt from quarantine control as a result of the agreement with Agriculture Ministers in the EC on 15 June; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Gummer:** From 1 January 1994, commercially traded animals born and kept on the holding of origin, from the following groups, will be subject to similar rules as for farm livestock and need not undergo quarantine:

Edentata
Hydracoidea
Dermoptera
Insectivora
Lagomorpha
Marsupalia
Rodentia

Additionally, from 1 July 1994, subject to very stringent conditions certain commercially traded cats and dogs for breeding may move between registered premises without quarantine.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the consideration at future meetings of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on acceptable alternatives to quarantine for pet animals is linked to any time scale; and if a decision on such alternatives will be made by majority vote.

**Mr. Soames:** No time scale has been adopted. I hope that any agreement on rabies control measures for pet animals would be unanimous, as was the agreement on commercially traded animals on 15 June.

## Cats and Dogs (Imports)

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* traded cats and dogs and *(b)* cats and dogs which are pets, were imported into the United Kingdom for each of the last five years.

**Mr. Gummer:** This detailed information is not collected by the Ministry.

## Animal Diseases

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the number of cases of marble spleen disease in game birds in each month since January 1991;

(2) if he will list the number of cases of enteric salmonellosis in pigs in each month since January 1991;

(3) if he will list the number of cases of hypocalcaemia and hypomagnesaemia in sheep in each month since January 1991;

(4) if he will list the number of cases of swine erysipelas in each month since January 1991;

(5) if he will list the number of cases of parvovirus infection in pigs in each month since January 1991;

(6) if he will list the number of cases of pyelonephritis and greasy pig disease in each month since January 1991;

(7) if he will list the number of cases of swayback, coenuniosis, listeriosis, scrapie and border disease in sheep in each month since January 1991;

(8) if rotavirus infection in calves is notifiable; and if he will list the numbers of cases in each month since January 1991;

(9) if he will list the number of abortions in cattle caused by bacillus licheniformis in each month since January 1991.

**Mr. Soames:** The figures are as follows:

| | 1991 | | | | | | | | | | | | 1992 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *January* | *February* | *March* | *April* | *May* | *June* | *July* | *August* | *September* | *October* | *November* | *December* | *January* | *February* | *March* |
| Marble Spleen Disease (Birds) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Enteric salmonellosis in pigs—not recorded but included in S. Typhimurium and | 12 | 10 | 12 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 5 | 12 | 8 | 10 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 5 |
| Other Serotypes | 16 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 12 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 7 |
| Hypocalcaemia (Sheep) | 9 | 30 | 47 | 16 | 11 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 27 | 44 | 41 |
| Hypomagnesaemia (Sheep) | 6 | 10 | 19 | 22 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 14 |
| Swine Erysipelas | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| Parvovirus in Pigs | 3 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 7 | 4 |
| Pyelonephritis in Pigs | 3 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Greasy Pig Disease (Exudative Dermatitis) | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 9 |
| Swayback (Sheep) | 1 | 3 | 8 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Coenuniosis (Coenurriasis) (Sheep) | 3 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| Listeriosis (Sheep) | 24 | 58 | 74 | 57 | 18 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 19 | 48 | 42 |
| Footopathy caused by Listeria (Sheep) | 17 | 22 | 24 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 36 | 17 |
| Scrapie (Sheep) | 126 | 120 | 141 | 80 | 67 | 62 | 54 | 76 | 73 | 69 | 52 | 69 | 91 | 119 | 69 |
| Border Disease (Sheep) | 2 | 3 | 16 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Rotavirus Infection (Cattle) | 177 | 197 | 218 | 189 | 105 | 55 | 66 | 61 | 96 | 125 | 157 | 169 | 175 | 209 | 207 |
| Abortions in cattle caused by Bacillus Licheniformis | 16 | 19 | 23 | 10 | 12 | 17 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 23 | 13 | 23 |

*Note:*
Figures for April and May 1991 are not yet available.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Child Support Regulations

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will lay the regulations consequent on the Child Support Act 1991.

**Mr. Burt:** In laying today the first package of Child Support Regulations we have sought to achieve the right balance between the needs of parents and others responsible for the day to day care of children and absent parents who still retain responsibilities for their upkeep.

Today's regulations contain a number of important provisions including the precise details of the assessment formula provided for in the Child Support Act, the powers of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to collect necessary information and charging of interest on maintenance arrears.

Before becoming law these regulations must be debated in Parliament. Further regulations regarding collection and enforcement procedures will follow shortly and a final package of regulations will be brought forward in due course.

Comments on our proposals for the regulations were received from around 100 organisations and individuals who responded to the consultation exercise. A consultation exercise was also undertaken in Northern Ireland. Five hundred copies of the consultation document were sent out last November. We have considered the comments carefully and we have been helped in our decision-making by the helpful recommendations put to us. The main variations are:

*Minimum payment required from some absent parents on Income Support*

The Government have decided to modify its proposals for requiring absent parents on Income Support, if they are fit and not currently responsible for children, to make a minimum payment. It is now proposed that those who are under 18 years old will not have to pay. For those who will have to pay, the minimum payment is at the same level as other standard deductions from Income Support, and is designed to establish the liability and a pattern of contributing to maintenance.

*Dates from which maintenance liability is effective*

The Government have looked very carefully at the comments about the date from which liability for maintenance should come into effect and has now decided that the effective date in all new cases, regardless of the benefit status of the person with care, will be the date on which the absent parent is notified that a maintenance application from (MAFF) has been received by the Agency. This will be the date when the maintenance inquiry form (MEF) is issued to the absent parent.

While the absent parent may owe some arrears by the time he or she is notified of the assessment, they will accrue only from the time he is aware of a Child Support Agency interest and can take steps to put money aside. Where the absent parent applies for maintenance assessment, the effective date will remain the date of receipt of the MAF by the Child Support Agency. Cases in the transitional period where there is an existing court order will have an effective date of issue of the maintenance assessment plus 2 days to allow for postage.

*Phasing in Formula Assessments*

The Government have reconsidered its proposals to phase in formula assessments where they are larger than existing orders. It was the original intention to restrict phasing to absent parents with a second family who had a court order.

The Government consider that this would discriminate unfairly against parents who had made voluntary agreements to pay maintenance, and now proposes to extend phasing to absent parents with a second family who have written evidence of a maintenance agreement.

The Government has also concluded that the original proposals were weighted too much towards the needs of the absent parent to the detriment of the interest of the person with care, and so it has reconsidered the duration and amount of the phasing arrangements. Regulations will therefore be laid to allow for phasing to last for one year before the full formula assessment will be instituted, to be available only where the formula assessment is less than £60, and to be based on a stepped increase of £20.

*Maintenance Requirement*

The Government originally proposed a reduction in the amount of the adult allowance included in the maintenance requirement when the youngest child reaches the age of 11. However, in response to concerns expressed particularly by legal bodies as to the clear responsibilities that remain for the care and welfare of children under 16, we have now decided not to reduce the allowance at age 11.

*Reasonable housing costs*

The Government had always intended that housing costs should be allowed in full provided that the parent acted responsibly in taking on housing costs in the light of existing commitments.

It is now proposed that no restriction of allowable housing costs will apply to parents who are disabled or have a disabled child or children living with them. High housing costs brought about by factors such as interest rate rises will also be allowed, as will costs which the parent has been meeting for at least 52 weeks.

*Maintenance Application Form (MAF)*

Fourteen days will now be allowed, rather than seven, for the return of the MAF, this will give the person with care longer to complete the form but ensure that the payment of maintenance is not unduly delayed.

*Reviews*

Under the new scheme, there will be automatic annual reviews of maintenance assessments which will pick up changes of circumstances. In the meantime, however, as originally proposed, maintenance assessments will be changed if the difference in the new amount is £10 per week or more. This will ensure that significant changes do not need to wait until the annual review while ensuring that the person with care can expect a stable income from maintenance.

In some particular circumstances—where an absent parent gets the benefit of protected income and there is an increase in the amount of maintenance payable, or there is a new qualifying child, or a child ceases to be a qualifying child—the amount will be changed if the difference is £1 or more (rather than zero as originally proposed).

*Interim Maintenance Assessment (IMA)*

The Government now propose to set the level of an IMA at one and a half times the maintenance requirement instead of double. The Government also propose to increase the warning period (before an IMA is actually imposed) from seven to 14 days.

*Tribunals*

The Government has decided not to pursue its proposal that child support appeal tribunal chairman should have a

discretionary power to exclude representatives. They have also decided to propose that hearings will be held in private, unless the chairman directs otherwise.

*Shared Care*

The Government have decided to maintain its decision that two nights overnight stay is the minimum amount of care necessary to justify reducing the maintenance the absent parent pays. That provision keeps the right balance between the interests of both parents and interests of the child, given that shared care should mean joint responsibility for all important aspects of a child's upbringing, nurture, and day-to-day care and expense.

*Requirement to Co-operate*

The Government remain of the view that a sanction is needed to ensure that a parent with care cannot simply decide, with no good reason, to pass the full costs of maintaining a child on to the taxpayer rather than to seek maintenance from the other parent. The current proposals already include a number of changes which were made as a result of helpful comment during Parliamentary debate on the primary legislation. These changes were welcomed when they were made, and the Government feel that the right balance has now been achieved.

The Government believe that the level and duration of reduction set out in the consultation document achieve its objective of encouraging the parent to think his or her responsibilities and the benefits that maintenance offers to the child concerned.

Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that there would be a risk of the parent with care, or of any child living with the parent, suffering harm or undue distress as a result of pursuing maintenance, then no further action will be taken. The Government have said before that "harm or undue distress" would cover a risk of violence to the parent or child.

While corroborative evidence in support of a parent's claim of good cause will be welcome, it will not be essential. A Social Security Commissioner's decision sets out the presumption which applies in similar circumstances for benefit decisions, namely that the person concerned is telling the truth, unless there are strong grounds for thinking otherwise. The Government think it is right to follow such an approach for child maintenance.

Suitable and comprehensive training and guidance will be given to staff of the Child Support Agency to ensure that this sensitive area of work is handled professionally and sympathetically.

*Take-on of Responsibility by the Child Support Agency*

As indicated in general terms in the consultation document, the responsibilities of the Child Support Agency will be taken on over a period of time. From April 1993 the agency will take responsibility for the assessment, collection and enforcement of child maintenance in respect of all cases where there are no existing arrangements in place with the court.

Additionally, the Department of Social Security, with its "liable relative" responsibilities under section 24 of the Social Security Act 1986, has a large number of maintenance cases either presently without an arrangement or under an existing court order or voluntary agreement, and the Government intends to assess these cases under the Child Support Act over the three-year period 1993-96.

There are a large number of cases that have a court order but where there is no benefit involved. Because the agency will be taking on all new claims for maintenance and liable relative cases from 1993 it will not be possible for the agency to accommodate these cases, where parties wish to come to the agency, until 1996. Fropm April 1996, the person with care will be able to apply to the agency for an assessment, subject to phasing by surname of the person with care to the following timetable:

| | |
|---|---|
| Surname A-D | April 1996 |
| Surname E-K | July 1996 |
| Surname L-R | October 1996 |
| Surname S-Z | January 1997 |

From April 1997 the agency will provide full services for all maintenance cases.

## Disability Benefits

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider and investigate the implications of the Social Security Act 1975, section 82(5) and the Persons Abroad Regulation 2(1)-2(1)c in relation to ethnic minority groups in Britain taking their disability benefits permanently abroad; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** We have no plans to amend the regulations to which the hon. Member refers. However, we will consider this matter further and reply to the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) about any specific recommendations they wish to make following the launch on 29 May of there pamphlet entitled "Disability Benefits While Living Abroad".

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Miss Widdecombe:** We are aware of the importance of the care of the environment and we promote the use of environmentally friendly goods whenever possible.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Our policy is to promote the use of environmentally friendly materials, processes and products in the goods and services which we purchase. We expect to meet the requirements of the Montreal protocol and the EC regulations by the prescribed dates.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information requested is not available but we are committed to reducing the use of ozone-depleting substances where suitable alternatives are available.

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to raise child benefit to £10·40 per week; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** We are committed to increasing the current value of child benefit each year in line with prices. Child benefit will remain the cornerstone of our policies for family support and will continue to be paid to all families in respect of all children.

### Income Support

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to allow income support to be paid in advance, in cases where this is necessary to secure accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** Income support is available to meet day to day living expenses whilst budgeting or crisis loans may be awarded from the social fund for rent in advance. In 1991-92, 11,992 social fund awards were made for rent in advance, totalling more than £1·4 million. Income support for people under pension age is paid in arrears. This is in line with the way wages and other benefits are paid. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

### Mr. P. Mills-Williamson

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the mobility allowance claim appeal of Mr. P. Mills-Williamson, of 23 Higher Park, East Prawle, Kingsbridge, South Devon, to be heard by the adjudication officer; why there has been a delay; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of mobility allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend shortly and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Maxwell Pension Funds

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if a formal request is to be made to the authorities in Liechtenstein regarding Maxwell funds that could be held in that country; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 19 June at column *704*.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to make a statement in the House before the summer recess over future funding for pensioners in Maxwell companies.

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 16 June at column *489*.

### Claimants

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of people receiving income support/supplementary benefit in each of the years 1979-80 to 1991-92 for Scotland and Great Britain; and what is the estimate of dependants of these claimants in each year.

**Mr. Burt:** The information available is in the tables. The most recent figures are as at May 1991, rounded to the nearest thousand.

*Table 1*
*Supplementary benefit/income support recipients in Scotland*

| Year | Number of claimants | Number of dependants |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 286,000 | 165,000 |
| 1980 | 304,000 | 178,000 |
| 1981 | 371,000 | 238,000 |
| 1982 | 423,000 | 282,000 |
| 1983 | 440,000 | 273,000 |
| 1984 | 458,000 | 304,000 |
| 1986 | 506,000 | 326,000 |
| 1987 | 535,000 | 327,000 |
| 1988 | 499,000 | 328,000 |
| 1989 | 486,000 | 313,000 |
| 1990 | 481,000 | 296,000 |
| 1991 | 487,000 | 318,000 |

*Table 2*
*Supplementary benefit/income support recipients in Great Britain*

| Year | Number of claimants | Number of dependants |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 2,855,000 | 1,516,000 |
| 1980 | 3,118,000 | 1,746,000 |
| 1981 | 3,723,000 | 2,399,000 |
| 1982 | 4,267,000 | 2,803,000 |
| 1983 | 4,349,000 | 2,889,000 |
| 1984 | 4,609,000 | 3,119,000 |
| 1986 | 4,938,000 | 3,354,000 |
| 1987 | 4,896,000 | 3,310,000 |
| 1988 | 4,352,000 | 3,036,000 |
| 1989 | 4,161,000 | 2,862,000 |
| 1990 | 4,180,000 | 2,770,000 |
| 1991 | 4,487,000 | 3,260,000 |

*Notes:*
1. No information is available for 1985.
2. Dependants means partners of a claimant and children and young persons aged up to 19, living in the household of a claimant.

*Source:* Supplementary Benefit/Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiries 1979-1991.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund grants and loans have been made in each district in Wales in each year from 1988-89 to 1991-92.

**Mr. Scott:** Information about social fund awards is in the Library.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the gross and net social fund budget for grants and loans respectively for each district in Wales, in total and per head of income support caseload, for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92, and the corresponding gross and estimated net total and per capita budget figures for 1992-93 based on the caseload at the latest date for which information is available.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library and Public Information Office.

### Benefits Agency

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action was taken as a result of the letter sent to the chief executive of the Benefits Agency by Mr. Martin Baillie of the Islington Welfare Rights Unit on 9 January concerning leaflet FB31.

**Mr. Burt:** The wording of leaflets is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Unemployment Statistics

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total cost of unemployment in each of the years 1979-80 and 1991-92 at current prices broken down by income support, unemployment benefit, housing benefit and rate or poll tax rebate; and what estimate he has made of the extra cost per 100,000 unemployed in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95.

**Mr. Burt:** Information on the cost of unemployment is not available in exactly the form requested, as the DSS element of housing support was included in supplementary benefit in 1979-80. The available information is given in the table.

Estimates of the extra cost per 100,000 unemployed are given in Figure 25 of the 1992 departmental report (Cm. 1914), a copy of which is in the Library.

*£ million at 1991-92 prices*

| | *1979-80* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment benefit | 1,516 | 1,506 |
| Supplementary benefit/income support | 1,897 | 4,143 |
| Housing benefit/community charge benefit | | 1,713 |

1991-92 figures are estimated outturn.
1991-92 figures for income support includes social fund expenditure.

### Government Resettlement Units

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Government re-settlement units are currently in operation; and if he will make a statement.

**Miss Widdecombe:** There are currently 15 resettlement units in operation. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 5 February 1992 at column *210*.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Water Shortages

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statutory powers the Director General of the Office of Water Services has in respect of water shortages; when he expects to receive the report of his Department's investigation into water shortages; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** My Department will be issuing a consultation paper on water conservation before the summer recess. Among other things this will discuss the role in that context of the Director General of Water Services. The statutory responsibility for water resources management belongs to the National Rivers Authority.

### Development Policy

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that in future development of land and resources in the south west in general, and Torridge and west Devon in particular, the areas' natural assets and environmental diversity will be safeguarded.

**Mr. Baldry:** Yes. Regional planning guidance and the plan-led system of development control can help achieve this. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be issuing regional guidance in response to advice from the South West regional planning conference. At the more local level, planning authorities have a responsibility in their development plans to make adequate provision for development but they must take environmental considerations comprehensively and consistently into account. Plans have to include policies on the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the land.

### Mersey Special Protection Area

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the extent of the area of the Mersey estuary which has been proposed for designation as a special protection area under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds.

**Mr. Maclean:** I will arrange for a map showing the proposed boundary of the Mersey estuary special protection area to be sent to the hon. Member.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to designate the Mersey estuary as a special protection area under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Government are firmly committed to an accelerated SPA designation programme. We recognise the value of the Mersey estuary in the light of the scientific evidence put forward by the former Nature Conservancy Council. There are many complex issues to consider and I cannot at this stage forecast when the Mersey estuary will be designated.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify those features of the Mersey estuary which are of nature conservation importance, and provide an indication of the main factors necessary to maintain their conservation importance.

**Mr. Maclean:** I will arrange for the hon. Member to be sent a copy of the site of special scientific interest notification which gives details of the important nature conservation interests of the Mersey estuary. Many complex inter-related ecological factors operate in the estuary which help to maintain these interests. The features of the estuary are already afforded firm protection under the SSSI notification and through local planning policies and procedures. The Estuary Group of the Mersey Campaign Basin (supported by my Department's Mersey campaign unit) have commissioned a management plan which is intended shall give a good framework to all interested bodies facing the many difficult issues that arise in the planning and conservation of such a vital area.

### Unitary Local Government

**Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the potential organisational benefits of moving to a unitary system of local government where appropriate;

(2) what estimates he has made of potential savings in the long and the short term of a unitary system of local government.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** It will be for the Local Government Commission to assess the costs and benefits of changes to the structure of local government.

### Grace and Favour Apartments

**Mr. Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate how many grace and favour apartments are situated in crown properties and list the criteria used for allocating the tenancies.

**Mr. Baldry:** This information is no longer held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Local Government Boundaries

**Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons it has been decided to carry out the review of local government boundaries in Surrey at a different time from its neighbours.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The programme of reviews of local government structure and boundaries to be carried out by the Local Government Commission is designed to give priority to areas where there is a history of dissatisfaction with the existing local government structure, and to produce a balanced and manageable workload for the new commission.

### Opencast Mining

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach his conclusions following the review of the operation of Mineral Planning Guidance 3 into opencast mining.

**Mr. Baldry:** I expect to be in a position to announce my conclusions shortly.

### Humberside Structure Plan

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what evidence the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 based its conclusions on the opportunities for residential development in the city of Hull;

(2) what assessment has been made by the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 of the capacity of the infrastructure to accommodate growth in the areas they designate;

(3) if he will make a statement on the reasoning behind the view of the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 that market demand cannot be switched from one part of the wider Hull area to another;

(4) what factors led to the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 to conclude that the scope for development on the periphery of the larger settlements in the borough of Beverley had not been fully explored;

(5) what methodology the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 used to distribute the target housing figure between the nine Humberside districts;

(6) what was the methodology used by the examining panel to arrive at the flexibility allowance in the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1;

(7) what was the source of the housing provision figure produced by the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1;

(8) what consideration the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 gave to the desirability of waiting for the outcome of the 1991 census results before reaching conclusions about the housing provision figures;

(9) if he will make a statement on the proposals in the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 to relax policy S9 in the existing structure plan;

(10) what were the range of factors aside from marketability used by the examining panel to determine housing provision figures for each of the Humberside districts in the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1;

(11) in considering the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1, what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the examining panel's recommendations are in accord with recent departmental advice on sustainability;

(12) for what reasons the error in policy 39(ii) concerning the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1, referred to by the borough of Beverley, was not corrected;

(13) for what reasons the examining panel for the Humberside county structure plan decided to limit itself to two tours of inspection of the county before recommending alterations to the plan;

(14) in considering the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1, what weight he attached to the strength of existing policies and, in particular, policy S9 in the existing Humberside county structure plan in reaching the conclusion that there was no need for a green belt because pressures could be controlled by means of these existing policies;

(15) if he will specify the grounds on which he reached the conclusion that the examining panel's recommendations concerning additional housing in the borough of Beverley in relation to the Humberside county structure plan alteration no. 1 were in accord with the recent departmental advice that the best and most versatile land should be protected;

(16) for what reasons the objection submitted in writing by the borough of Beverley was not taken into account by the examining panels in their statement concerning the Humberside county structure plan alteration No. 1 that policy S7(a) was not the subject of objection at the examination in public;

(17) in considering the Humberside county structure plan alteration No. 1, for what reasons he decided to support the proposals recommended by the examining panel which will join together by future development the city of Hull and the presently distinct urban areas of the borough of Beverley;

(18) in considering the Humberside county structure plan alteration No. 1 on what factors he based his conclusions that the examining panel's recommendations are in accord with his recent departmental advice

concerning the placing of increased emphasis on re-using urban land as a means of relieving pressure on the countryside;

(19) in relation to the Humberside county structure plan alteration No. 1, for what reasons the examining panels decided that 29 per cent. of the increase in housing provision should be placed in the borough of Beverley rather than in other districts in the county;

(20) for what reasons he decided to be site specific in the alterations to the existing Humberside county structure plan rather than follow the previous practice of being non-site specific in the structure plan.

**Mr. Baldry:** The panel's reasons for its recommendations are set out in its published report, and it would be inappropriate for my right hon. and learned Friend to elaborate on those. Similarly, his reasons for proposing the published modifications are contained in his statement relating to those modifications, which has also been published.

When the period for representations ends, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider all those received before deciding whether to proceed straight to approval of the alteration, or whether to propose further modifications.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Maclean:** The Department encourages industry and local authorities to recycle CFCs. The Department has invited bids from local councils for supplementary credit approvals for new recycling projects. About 80 per cent. of local authorities now run or take part in such schemes. We have also produced a consumer leaflet which includes advice on how to ensure CFCs and halons are recycled. As a further measure, we intend to ban the supply of refrigerant in disposable containers. These containers lead to unnecessary emissions of CFCs and act as a disincentive to good practice, including recycling.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Maclean:** My Department's policy in respect of the purchase of ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured by these substances is to eliminate the use of all such products, if possible, in advance of the phase out dates set by EC regulations and the Montreal protocol and to ensure that chemicals are properly recovered.

HCFCs are needed in some areas if users are to move away rapidly from CFCs. The United Kingdom, together with the EC, is playing an active role in discussions to control HCFCs under the Montreal protocol. The Department will consider its own use of HCFCs once these discussions are completed.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Maclean:** Figures on the amounts of ozone-depleting chemicals used by my Department since 1989 are not available. My Department is fully committed to eliminating the use of these products as soon as it is practicable to do so. Since 1989 considerable progress has been made towards this objective by the inclusion of a requirement in departmental contracts for supplies and services that products containing ozone-depleting chemicals must not be used where acceptable alternatives exist. Other departmental initiatives have included the replacement of all hand-held halon fire extinguishers with environmentally acceptable alternatives.

## Business Rates

**Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to abolish the 50 per cent. business rate on non-productive empty premises; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** No. Empty property benefits from local services and it is right that it should contribute to the cost. We estimate that abolition would cost £600 million a year. We are already providing £1·25 billion of help to businesses over the next three years under the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1992.

Charging authorities have discretion to grant rate relief to businesses in cases of hardship provided it is in the interests of their community chargepayers to do so.

## Council House Sales

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to invest moneys raised from the sales of councils houses into expansion of the rented sector of accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Baldry:** Local authorities must set aside 75 per cent. of capital receipts from the sale of council houses (and 50 per cent. of most other receipts) to meet outstanding debt. They are free to use the remainder of those receipts to finance new capital investment. This arrangement has enabled a greater proportion of capital receipts to be recycled in the form of new credit approvals to those local authorities where housing needs are greatest and where best value for money may be obtained.

Housing associations are now the main providers of new social housing.

## Housing Association Ombudsman

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to establish the ombudsman for housing association tenants.

**Mr. Baldry:** We are considering at present what form the ombudsman service should take, and we shall be working with the Housing Corporation to get progress under way as quickly as possible.

### Drinking Water

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the report of the drinking water inspectorate's investigation into the outbreak of cryptosporidiosis in North Humberside; and if he will state the reasons for the present delay.

**Mr. Maclean:** This case has raised a number of new and complex issues, and necessarily continues to involve external advisers as well as the drinking water inspectorate. It is being taken forward as quickly as possible and I shall make a statement as soon as there is progress to report.

### Building Material Sales

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the value of building material sales in each region of the United Kingdom, and in the country as a whole, in the latest quarter for which figures are available; what was the comparable figure for the same quarter in the previous years; and what the percentage change is in each region over the period in question.

**Sir George Young:** The available regional information relates to quantity sold or delivered of certain building materials. This is published in tables 5, 6, 10 and 12 of the Department's "Monthly Bulletin of Building Materials and Components", a copy of which is in the Library. It is not possible to aggregate different products expressed in different units.

Sales by value are only available for the country as a whole and this information is published by industry in the Central Statistical Office Business Monitor series, copies of which are in the Library. However, it is not possible to identify on a comprehensive basis how much is sold for use as building materials.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Livestock Testing Stations

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he intends *(a)* to sell or otherwise dispose of or *(b)* to discontinue the service provided by Loughgall beef testing station and Antrim pig testing station.

**Mr. Hanley:** It has been decided that the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland should cease to provide livestock recording and testing services to pedigree cattle, sheep and pig breeders. The Department is consulting the relevant interests in the livestock industry about future requirements for such services and, if they are to continue, how they would be organised and financed by the industry. The future of the test stations at Loughgall and Antrim will be decided later in the light of the response from the industry.

### Agencies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Compensation Agency, the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency and Ordnance Survey as agencies; and whether the cost in each case was borne by the parent department or the new agency.

**Mr. Mates:** A total of £1,230 was spent on events and publicity surrounding the launch of the Compensation Agency, the cost of which was met by the agency; £2,820 on the launch of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency, with all costs being met by the parent Department, except £365 which was paid by the agency, and £249 on the launch of the Ordnance Survey Executive Agency, the cost of which was borne by the Ordnance Survey.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the maximum salary payable, including performance-related element, and the length of time of the contract of each of the chief executives of the Compensation Agency, the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency and Ordnance Survey.

**Mr. Mates:** The maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency, including the performance-related element is £38,134. His contract is for a period terminating three years after 1 April 1992, with the possibility of renewal for a further period.

The maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Ordnance Survey (NI) Agency is £46,122 which includes a performance-related element. Arrangements in respect of a special performance bonus have not yet been finalised. His contract is for a period terminating four years after 1 April 1992, with the possibility of renewal for a further period.

The maximum salary payable to the chief executive of the Compensation Agency, including a performance-related element is £45,000. His contract is for a period of three years, terminating on 31 March 1995, with the possibility of renewal for a further period.

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the first degree obtained by the chief executives of each of the Compensation Agency, the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency and Ordnance Survey; and from which university or polytechnic it was awarded in each case.

**Mr. Mates:** The chief executives of the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency and the Compensation Agency do not have a first degree. The first degree obtained by the chief executive of the Ordnance Survey (NI) Agency was BA (Hons) in Geography from the university of Leeds.

### Ozone Depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Atkins:** Our policy is to encourage measures relating to the recovery and recycling of these chemicals. Schemes for the removal of chlorofluorocarbons from redundant refridgerators and freezers are available in most district council areas of Northern Ireland.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Atkins:** The information requested is not available.

### International Agreements

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the bilateral and multilateral agreements directly or indirectly negotiated by his Department or a body acting on behalf of his Department with *(a)* Switzerland and *(b)* Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Mates:** There are no such agreements.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year her Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances controlled by the Montreal protocol and hydrofluorocarbons.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** It is part of the Department's environmental policy to eliminate where possible the use of non-renewable resources or toxic materials.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will outline her Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The use by the Department of ozone-depleting chemicals is minimal but we pay due regard to proper disposal methods.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by her Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within her Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by her Department.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Department is not a major user of ozone-depleting chemicals. There are no records of the quantities used, held or ordered for future use. Such information would be available only at disproportionate cost.

### Training

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on the skills offered to those on employment training in relation to those necessary to help them obtain jobs in the current labour market.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 16 June at column *493*.

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she will make publicly available the range of management and evaluation information which is collected by her Department about employment training.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** A great deal of information about employment training is already available. The Department produces an annual report on research. The 1992 report will be published shortly. This contains summaries of research and evaluation projects carried out on employment training in 1991-92 and lists those to be carried out in 1992-93. A copy will be placed in the Library. A regular monthly report containing information about the success of employment training trainees in obtaining employment and qualifications is placed in the Library. The Department also produces a Labour Market Quarterly Report which includes employment training management information.

### Wage Statistics

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give from the new earnings survey the number of employees in Scotland, broken down by age and sex, in each of the categories: paid less than £2 per hour, £2 to £2·99, £3 to £3·99, £4 to £4·99, and £5 to £9·99 and over £10 per hour.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** It is estimated, based on the 1991 New Earnings Survey and estimates of the number of employees in employment from other Departmental enquiries, that the number of employees in each category are as given in the table. The figures are not available broken down by age.

*Employees in Scotland* *March/April 1991*

*Numbers with hourly earnings excluding overtime*

| | *less than £2·00* | *£2·00—£2·99* | *£3·00—£3·99* | *£4·00—£4·99* | *£5·00—£9·99* | *over £10·00* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Males** | 25,000 | 50,000 | 150,000 | 175,000 | 475,000 | 175,000 |
| **Females** | 25,000 | 125,000 | 275,000 | 175,000 | 275,000 | 50,000 |

*Note:* The estimates have been rounded to the nearest 25,000.

### Wages Councils

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to increase the number and extend the scope of wages councils in Scotland.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** None.

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each of the years 1979-80 to 1991-92 the number and names of employers in Scotland prosecuted under wages council legislation for making illegal underpayments.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** From 1 January 1979 to date, there have been five prosecutions in Scotland for illegal underpayment of wages; they are as follows:

*1991:*

Allardyce Cafe (Stonehaven) Ltd., Stonehaven;
Snooker Masters Ltd., Wishaw.

*1992:*
J. & M. Beattie, Banchory;
Nursery World, Inverness;
Pattie Skelton, Glasgow.

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she has any plans to abolish the remaining wages councils; and if she will make a statement.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Government have made it clear on many occasions that the wages councils have no permanent place in the labour market.

**Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give the number of employees covered by wages councils in each of the standard regions, Scotland and Great Britain and for each occupation.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information as requested is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Training and Enterprise Councils

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *497*, and to article 6.4 of the Training and Enterprise Councils Operating Agreement 1992, if she will list those chairmen of TECs who have left the post because their company or partnership *(a)* ceased to achieve an annual turnover exceeding £5 million, *(b)* no longer met the requirement of at least 25 full time employees, *(c)* voluntary reasons and *(d)* other reasons.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Information is not kept in the precise format requested. The following table shows that of the 26 TEC chairmen referred to in my previous answer, 10 left for voluntary reasons and 16 for other reasons such as retirement or geographical moves which meant that they were unable to retain the chairmanship.

| *Training and enterprise council* | *Chairman* |
|---|---|
| *Left chairmanship for voluntary reasons* | |
| Thames Valley Enterprise | Tim Evans |
| South Glamorgan | Roger Helliwell |
| North Derbyshire | Roy Pelham |
| Shropshire | David Houghton |
| Hertfordshire | Tony Saint |
| Bedfordshire | Ian Dixon |
| North West London | Alan Coppin |
| North Nottinghamshire | Anthony Darbyshire |
| Wolverhampton | Roy Carver |
| Wearside | John Anderson |
| *Left chairmanship for other reasons* | |
| West Wales | Peter Allen |
| HAWTEC | David Hutchins |
| Hampshire | Martyn Wylie |
| QUALITEC (St. Helens) | John Gillespie |
| Leeds | Sir Gordon Linacre |
| Rotherham | Ken Knaggs |
| CAMBSTEC | Leszek Jakubowski |
| Greater Nottingham | Ian Maclean |
| Southern Derbyshire | Peter Burden |
| AZTEC | Ed Holloway |
| Manchester | Geoffrey Maddrell |
| Calderdale/Kirklees | Tony Gartland |
| Teesside | Peter Kerr |
| Dorset | Peter Allsebrook |
| Stockport and High Peak | Tom Weatherby |
| METROTEC (Wigan) | Paul Sneddon |

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Science and Technology

32. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set up a new Government advisory structure for science and technology.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** My right hon. Friend is considering what advisory structure would enable him to carry out our responsibilities for science and technology most effectively. We are seeking views from all interested parties on the best way of achieving this. As I announced in the House on 11 June, the Government intend to publish a White Paper on science and technology, probably in the early part of next year, and I will consult widely in its preparation.

37. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has to improve the funding of interdisciplinary science.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** The Government recognise the value of interdisciplinary research across classical discipline boundaries and have already provided substantial additional funding for such research through the interdisciplinary research centre initiative.

### Civil Service

38. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in putting civil service functions out to tender.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** As promised in the White Paper "Competing for Quality", departmental targets for market testing in 1992-93 will be announced later this year.

39. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants in grades 1 and 2 hold commercial qualifications and how many degrees in the arts.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** Grade 1 and 2 civil servants gain the commercial knowledge which they need for their jobs in a variety of ways during their careers. These include experience from previous jobs, secondments, training programmes, conferences and regular contact with counterparts in the private sector. Of the current cadre of 170, just under half—84—have arts degrees. Of the remaining 86, three have masters of business administration; seven have accountancy qualifications, 27 are qualified in law; 11 have economics degrees; 11 have science degrees; six have mathematics degrees; and four have engineering qualifications.

### Charters

40. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce new charters.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The citizens charter White Paper (Cm 1599) includes a commitment to publish a charter for London Underground customers. This will be published shortly by London Undergorund Ltd. We intend to publish a courts charter later this year, and in due course a charter for higher and further education.

### Private Sector Management

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants in grades 1 and 2 have industrial or commercial experience of management in the private sector.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Some 60 civil servants in grades 1 and 2 have industrial or commercial experience of management in the private sector. Such experience has been obtained through working in the private sector, or on secondment, or through holding non-executive directorships of companies. Others have had experience of management in the wider public sector.

### Magistrates (Political Affiliation)

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what account he takes of the political affiliation of potential magistrates in his appointment policy within the Duchy.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The political affiliations of potential magistrates is a factor that needs to be taken into account by my advisory committees. These committees endeavour to recommend a bench which broadly reflects the local community as a whole.

### Citizens Charter

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the seminar which the Prime Minister held recently to discuss the citizens charter.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The Prime Minister held a seminar on the citizens charter at No. 10 Downing street on Friday 19 June. Ministers reported on the achievements of the last 12 months. These include the publication of 19 follow-up charters covering some of the most important areas of the public service such as education, health and British Rail.

The main purpose of the seminar was to agree a demanding programme of action for the next 12 months including: new charters covering courts and further and higher education; the extension of the patients charter into primary health care, most importantly general practitioner services; the publication this autumn, for the first time, of comparative tables of school performance; the publication, by the end of this year, of indicators against which the performance of police in England and Wales will be measured; and the issue of videos to explain court procedures in England and Wales to new jurors and to help owners of small businesses understand their tax.

### Agencies

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all executive agency chief executives, and their grade, stating whether they were appointed through open competition, and whether they were serving civil servants or direct entrants.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The table provides the information requested in respect of the 72 existing "next steps" agency chief executives at 16 June 1992. Of the 72 chief executives now in post, 20 were appointed internally, 47 following an open competition and five are armed forces appointments. Thirty-nine were serving civil servants, 28 were direct entrants and five were from the armed forces.

*Agency chief executives*

| *Agency* | *Chief executive* | *Civil service grade equivalents* | *Method of appointment* | *Origin* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Accounts Services Agency | Mike Hoddinott | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Agricultural Development Advisory Services Agency | Dr. Julia Walsh | 2 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Building Research Establishment | Roger Courtney | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| CADW (Welsh Historic Monuments) | John Carr | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Central Office of Information | Michael Devereau | 4 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Central Statistical Office | Brian McLennan | 1A | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Central Veterinary Laboratory | Tony Little | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Central Science Laboratory | Dr. Peter Stanley | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Chemical Biological Defence Establishment | Dr. Graham Pearson, CB | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Civil Service College | Marianne Neville-Rolfe | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Companies House | David Durham | 4 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Compensation Agency (Northern Ireland) | John Robinson | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Defence Research Agency | John Chisholm | 2 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Directorate General of Defence Accounts | Michael Dymond | 4 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency | Stephen Curtis | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (Northern Ireland) | Brian Watson | 5 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Driving Standards Agency | Dr. Christopher Woodman | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Duke of York's Military School[1] | Col. Christopher Horsfall | — | Armed forces appointment | Armed forces |
| DVOIT | David Evans | 5 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Employment Service | Michael Fogden | 3+ | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Fire Service College | Brian Fuller | Commandant | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Forensic Science Service | Dr. Janet Thompson | 4 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Historic Royal Palaces | David Beeton | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Historic Scotland | Graeme Munro | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| HMSO | Dr. Paul Freeman, CB | 2 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Hydrographic Office[1] | Rear Admiral John Myres | — | Armed forces appointment Open competition | Armed forces |
| Insolvency Service | Peter Joyce | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Intervention Board | Guy Stapleton | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |

| Agency | Chief executive | Civil service grade equivalents | Method of appointment | Origin |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Laboratory of the Government Chemist | Dr. Richard Worswick | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Land Registry | John Manthorpe | 2 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Medicines Control Agency | Dr. Keith Jones | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Meteorological Office | Professor Julian Hunt | 2 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Military Survey[1] | Major-General Roy Wood | — | Armed forces appointment | Armed forces |
| National Engineering Laboratory | William Edgar | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| National Weights and Measures Laboratory | Dr. Seton Bennett | 5 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| National Physical Laboratory | Dr. Peter Clapham, CB | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Natural Resources Institute | Anthony Beattie | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[1] | Capt. David Symonds | — | Armed forces appointment | Armed forces |
| NHS Estates | John Locke | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Occupational Health Service | Dr. George Sorrie | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Ordnance Survey | Professor David Rhind | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland | Michael Brand | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Patent Office | Paul Hartnack | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Planning Inspectorate | Stephen Crow | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Public Record Office | Sarah Tyacke | 3 | Opem competition | Direct entrant |
| Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre | Roy Kendrick | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Queen Victoria School | Julian Hankinson | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Radiocommunications Agency | John Michell | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| RAF Maintenance Unit[7] | Air Vice Marshal Don Campbell | — | Armed forces appointment | Armed forces |
| Rate Collection Agency (Northern Ireland) | David Gallagher | 6 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency | Michael Geddes | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Registers of Scotland | James Barron | 4 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Royal Mint | Tony Garrett | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Scottish Agricultural Science Agency | Dr. Robert Hay | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Scottish Fisheries Prrotection Agency | Andrew MacLeod | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[7] | Ian Mitchelson | 4 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Social Security Agency (Northern Ireland) | Alex Wylie | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Social Security Benefits Agency | Michael Bichard | 2 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Social Security Contributions Agency | Ann Chant | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Social Security Information Technology Services Agency | John Kenworthy | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Social Security Resettlement Agency | Tony Ward | 6 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Teachers' Pensions Agency | Denyse Metcalfe | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| The Buying Agency | Roger Powell | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Training and Employment Agency (Northern Ireland) | Julian Crozier | 3 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Transport Research Laboratory | John Wooton | 3 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| United Kingdom Passport Agency | John Hayzelden | 5 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Valuation Office | Rex Shutler CB | 2 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Vehicle Certification Agency | Derek Harvey | 5 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Vehicle Inspectorate | Ron Oliver | 4 | Internal appointment | Serving civil servant |
| Veterinary Medicines Directorate | Dr. Michael Rutter | 4 | Open competition | Direct entrant |
| Warren Springs Laboratory | Dr. D. Cormack | 3 | Open competition | Serving civil servant |
| Wilton Park Conference Centre | Geoffrey Denton | 5 | Open competition | Direct entrant |

[1] Defence Support Agency

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 23 June 1992*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Mr. G. Burrows

**Sir John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that the complaint of Mr. G. F. Burrows, details of which have been sent to him, made to the London fire and civil defence authority, was dealt with in accordance with regulation 5 of the Fire Services (Discipline) Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I understand that the London fire and civil defence authority gave full consideration to the allegations which were made to it by Mr. G. F. Burrows that certain senior officers had committed breaches of the Fire Services (Discipline) Regulations 1985. I have no reason to believe that the authority failed to comply with the procedures set out in the regulations for the investigation of alleged disciplinary offences.

### Police Manpower

**Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers are currently employed per head of population *(a)* in England and Wales, *(b)* by the Thames Valley force and *(c)* in the Milton Keynes police area of the Thames Valley force.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** The table shows the ratio of police officers to population. These ratios are calculated on the basis of population figures as at June 1990 and police strength as at 31 March 1992.

| | *Police-population ratio* |
|---|---|
| England and Wales (provisional forces) | 1:450 |
| Thames Valley Police | 1:526 |

In addition to officers posted to the Milton Keynes division, other police units, such as child protection and traffic units, contribute in part to the policing of Milton Keynes. It is not therefore possible to provide a precise estimate of the police-population ratio for Milton Keynes.

### Lee White

**Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement regarding the death of Lee White, aged 18, of Canvey island and the subsequent deaths at Feltham remand centre.

**Mr. Peter Lloyd:** I share the widespread concern which has been expressed about the tragic deaths of four young prisoners at Feltham young offender institution and remand centre between August 1991 and March 1992, including the suicide of Lee White. That concern is also deeply felt by the management and staff of Feltham, and we are deeply conscious of the sadness caused to the families concerned. My reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 17 June, at column *520*, described a number of measures which are being taken at Feltham to control acts of bullying, improve the care of vulnerable prisoners and so reduce the risk of any further tragedy occurring.

### Piara Lal

**Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now answer as a matter of urgency the letter from the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-East dated 15 April regarding the case of Piara Lal.

**Mr. Charles Wardle:** I expect to reply to the hon. Member in the near future.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Yugoslavia

**Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he is considering to bring about a settlement in Yugoslavia.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We fully support the efforts of the United Nations, of Lord Carrington's conference and of the EC monitoring mission to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia.

### Foreign Affairs Council

**Mr. Wells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues he expects to discuss at the next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council.

**Mr. Garel-Jones:** The agenda for the 20 July Foreign Affairs Council is likely to include the following items:
follow up to the Lisbon European Council, including enlargement and future financing;
Uruguay round;
relations with former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe;
EC/Turkey;
Yugoslavia
In the margins we intend to hold an EC/Egypt Co-operation Council.

### Sri Lanka

**Mr. Stevenson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the conflict in Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** We have long urged all sides to reach a negotiated settlement. We condemn the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam for breaking off talks and resorting again to violence in June 1990. We support the Sri Lankan Government in their efforts to defeat terrorism, while pressing for its counter-insurgency campaign to be conducted responsibly and with full respect for human rights.

### Research Projects

**Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the policy with regard to, and extent of, the commissioning of research projects in universities and polytechnics by Government communications headquarters.

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** GCHQ, in common with other Government Departments and private industry, commissions research from universities or polytechnics when they are able to offer a particular area of expertise. Research is confined to unclassified subjects and the results may be published by the university or polytechnic if it wishes for the benefit of the academic community as a whole. Over the last four years, research projects totalling £506,953 have been placed by GCHQ with seven institutions.

### China

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of the People's Republic of China on the recent deaths in police custody of Roman Catholic bishops Joseph Fan Xueyan, Paul Shi Chunje and Paul Li Zhenrong, and on the continued imprisonment of bishops Chen Jianzhang, Peter Liu Guandeng, Liu Shuke, Shi Enxiang, Julius Jia Zhigino, Liu Difen, Casimir Wang Milu, Yang Libo and Joseph Li Side; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** In our dealings with the Chinese authorities on human rights issues we have stressed that Chinese attitudes towards religious believers are of particular concern. Several of the individual cases raised by my hon. Friend were mentioned in the Prime Minister's revised list handed over during his meeting in January with Chinese Premier Li Peng in New York. Others were included in the list of 40 Roman Catholic cases of concern handed over by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) during his own visit to China last year.

## NATIONAL FINANCE

### EC Taxes

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he has had with Mrs. Scrivener, member of the European Commission responsible for economic policy, concerning the decision of the Commission of 13 May to introduce a minimum rate of carbon/energy tax effective from 1 January 1993 on a tax-neutral basis; and what provision he will make for compensatory alterations in *(a)* public expenditure and *(b)* other taxes to achieve tax neutrality.

**Sir John Cope:** None. Mrs. Scrivener is the Commissioner responsible for taxation policy. The Commission have recently prepared a draft directive on carbon/energy taxation for the Council's consideration. No new agreement on tax policy can be made without the unanimous agreement of all 12 member states.

### National Economic Development Council

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he consulted trade unions before deciding to eliminate NEDO and NEDC.

**Mr. Portillo:** No, but of course the normal courtesies were observed by informing the General Secretary of the TUC and the Director General of the CBI of my decision.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when NEDO or NEDC were last involved in pay bargaining.

**Mr. Portillo:** NEDC and NEDO have never been directly involved in pay bargaining. Pay issues have been discussed regularly in the NEDC throughout its history.

### Trade Unions

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often he meets trade union leaders.

**Mr. Portillo:** My right hon. Friend has not met trade union leaders recently other than at meetings of the NEDC. The existence of NEDC may have inhibited greater informal contact between Government and unions.

### Diesel Cars

**Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the changes in the car scale charge for diesel-run cars, as stated in the March 1992 Budget, will take effect.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The new income tax scale charges for the benefit of diesel fuel provided by employers for private use by employees in company cars are included in the current Finance Bill. On enactment the new scales will apply from the beginning of this tax year. Matching scales for VAT purposes were brought into force by Treasury order from 6 April 1992.

### EC Trade Balance

**Mr. Shore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, on the commencement of the European single market on 1 January 1993, he will continue regularly to publish statistics on the balance of trade with EC member states.

**Mr. Lamont:** Yes. But there will be some delay initially while the new collection system, Intrastat, becomes established. Further information about Intrastat has been deposited in the House of Commons Library.

### Inheritance Tax

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account is taken by his Department of payments received by landowners, including those for management agreements for sites of special scientific interest or set aside, in assessing the suitability of land for inheritance tax exemptions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** The heritage advisory agencies take all relevant factors into account when considering the eligibility of land for conditional exemption from inheritance tax.

Entitlement to payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1991 management agreements or for environmentally sensitive areas under the Agriculture Act 1986 may be affected if land is conditionally exempted.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria his Department uses to assess the benefits of inheritance tax exemptions for the granting of public access to land; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** In return for conditional exemption from inheritance tax, landowners are required to give undertakings to maintain the heritage property, preserve

its character and give reasonable public access to it. The heritage advisory agencies advise the Inland Revenue as to what constitutes reasonable public access: each case is considered individually on the basis of its own facts.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the procedure by which his Department informs local planning authorities of land where inheritance tax exemptions have been agreed for the granting of public access to land; how planning authorities are expected to take this into account when dealing with planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Dorrell:** Where inheritance tax exemption is being considered, a land management plan is prepared by the landowner. The appropriate heritage advisory agency consults the local authority or national park authority on the proposed plan. The planning authority is, therefore, aware of the exemption.

Planning applications are considered by the planning authority in the normal way, but the landowner is required to inform the heritage advisory agency of any proposed development of land which has received inheritance tax exemption. If the proposed development would lead to a breach of the undertakings given in return for the tax exemption, the agency discusses the position with the landowner and if a satisfactory outcome—for instance appropriate revised arrangements for public access—is not secured, a deferred inheritance tax charge will be triggered. To date, there has been no occasion on which such a tax charge has arisen.

### Bishopsgate Investment Management

**Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation report covering Bishopsgate Investment Management; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* It is for the Securities and Investments Board to consider IMRO's review in the first instance.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who has been appointed as a consultant to his Department for market testing.

**Mr. Portillo** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* In accordance with the policy set out in "Competing for Quality" a review of the scope for market testing services in the Treasury has been carried out. Touche Ross provided the private sector input to that review.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Recycling

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps he is taking to *(a)* maximise the recycling of envelopes received by hon. Members and *(b)* provide that hon. Members' parliamentary question forms are recycled after use.

**Mr. Beith:** It is understood that all non-confidential waste paper collected in the Palace of Westminster is sent for recycling; and that the appropriate domestic Select Committees include among their responsibilities advice on measures to increase the use of stationery containing recycled paper and on its disposal. In addition, I am advised that the Serjeant at Arms' stores holds stocks of economy labels designed to facilitate the reuse of envelopes. These labels are listed on Members' stationery order forms.

It is also understood that investigations are being carried out into the feasibility of introducing reusable packets for the transmission of quantities of Members' mail. If these studies are successful, the Administration Committee will be invited to consider their introduction to the range of House of Commons stationery.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Solicitors (Rights of Audience)

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on his plans to allow solicitors rights of audience in the higher courts.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor's advisory committee on legal education and conduct has recently given the Law Society its initial advice on its application for extended rights of audience for solicitors. It is now for the Law Society to decide how to take the application forward in the light of that advice. When the application is sent formally to the Lord Chancellor, he will seek the advice of the advisory committee and of the Director General of Fair Trading. The decision whether to approve the application is taken in the light of that advice by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the President of the Family Division and the Vice-Chancellor.

### Tribunals

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many members of social security appeal tribunals are from the visible minority communities.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Responsibility for the recruitment of people to serve as members of social security appeal tribunals lies with the president of the independent tribunal service, his honour Judge Holden and the hon. Member may wish to contact his office directly to obtain this information.

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to extend legal aid to industrial tribunals.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** There are no plans to extend legal aid to industrial tribunals. Advice and assistance, but not representation, are already available under the legal aid "green form" scheme.

## WALES

### Nasal Polyps

**Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those hospitals in Wales that carry out surgery for the removal of nasal polyps.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The following NHS hospitals have carried out surgery for the removal of nasal polyps during the last two years:
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd
Ysbyty Maelor
Bronglais General
West Wales General
Royal Gwent, Newport
Ysbyty Gwynedd
Bridgend General
East Glamorgan
Porth and District
Prince Charles
University Hospital Wales
Children's ENT, Ely
Singleton

### Toxic Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the toxic waste disposal sites in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** This information is not held centrally. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the district councils, which are responsible for licensing such sites.

### Residential Homes

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that *(a)* children and young people, *(b)* adult and elderly volunteers and *(c)* residents are not precluded from participation in catering and cooking at residential homes and sheltered accommodation for the elderly in Wales when such participation is aimed at creating a homely or community atmosphere for the residents.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Nobody in residential or sheltered accommodation is precluded by food hygiene legislation from taking part in the preparation of food. The extent to which they actually do so is a matter for them and for those directly responsible for their care.

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the number of elderly people currently living in non-registered residential homes *(a)* in Wales, *(b)* in each county in Wales and *(c)* in each district in Wales.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information on elderly people living in non-registered residential homes is not held centrally.

### Cardiff Bay Barrage

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a separate estimate for the appropriate allowance for price inflation in civil engineering for each year since November 1988 for the construction of each of *(a)* the Cardiff bay barrage, *(b)* the foreshore promenade beneath Penarth Head, *(c)* the outer harbour, *(d)* the breasting dolphins and *(e)* the alternative feeding grounds for wading birds specified as works 1-5 in the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

**Mr. David Hunt:** The appropriate allowance for price inflation in civil engineering, according to the PSA civil engineering cost indices, for each year since November 1988 is:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| November 1988—November 1989 | 9·2 |
| November 1989—November 1990 | 7·6 |
| November 1990—October 1991 | 5·5 |

These are applied to each of *(a)* the Cardiff bay barrage, *(b)* the foreshore promenade beneath Penarth Head, *(c)* the outer harbour, *(d)* the breasting dolphins and *(e)* the alternative feeding grounds.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Recycling

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the new plans for recycling at 10 Downing street he announced during his recent visit to Rio de Janeiro.

**The Prime Minister:** I gave a pledge, as part of the Tree of Life initiative that bottles at No. 10 would be recycled. A collection point for bottles has been established, from where they will be taken to a bottle bank as necessary.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 23 June.

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Inheritance Tax

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what record is kept of paintings donated to the nation in lieu of capital transfer or inheritance tax but left in their previous location in the care of their previous owner; what public access to the paintings is made available; what sums of tax have been forgone as a result of such donations during each of the past 10 years; and if he will list the paintings donated in this way during each of the last 10 years.

**Mr. Mellor:** The records of all acceptance in lieu cases, including those accepted "in situ" are kept centrally by my Department. One of the conditions of items accepted in lieu of tax in situ is that public access must be available for a minimum of 30 days a year. The total amount of tax forgone in the last 10 years on in-situ paintings are as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1981-82 | 702,635 |
| 1982-83 | — |
| 1983-84 | 138,423 |
| 1984-85 | — |
| 1985-86 | — |
| 1986-87 | — |
| 1987-88 | — |
| 1988-89 | 260,717 |
| 1989-90 | — |
| 1990-91 | 20,000 |
| 1991-92 | 404,544 |

The paintings accepted in this way are as follows:
Sir Anthony Van Dyck, 'The Betrayal of Christ'
Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'The Earl and Countess of

Mexborough and their son Lord Pollington'
Sir William Beechey, 'Portrait of Admiral George Campbell'
Francis Cotes, 'Portrait of Pryse Campbell'
Francis Cotes, 'Portrait of Sarah Campbell'
Francis Cotes, 'Portrait of Elizabeth Adams'
Francis Cotes, 'Portrait of John Campbell Hooke'
Francis Cotes, 'Portrait of Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Campbell'
Sir Thomas Lawrence, 'Portrait of John Frederick, 1st Earl of Cawdor'
Sir Thomas Lawrence, 'Portrait of Elizabeth Cawdor'
Sir Thomas Lawrence, 'Portrait of Laday Caroline Cawdor'
Attributable to Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'Portrait of Patrick Home'
Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'Portrait of John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset'
Sir Anthony Van Dyck, 'Portrait of Lady Frances Cranfield'.

### Ozone-Depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals;

(2) what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Mellor** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 22 June, *Official Report*, column 95.

### Anabolic Steroids

**Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions his Department is having with the Sports Council or others on restricting the use and trading of anabolic steroids in gymnasiums for sporting or other purposes; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Key** *[holding answer 19 June 1992]:* My Department has regular discussions with the Sports Council and other Government Departments about the misuse of anabolic steroids in sport. Anabolic steroids are prescription-only drugs in the United Kingdom and it is already an offence, under the Medicines Act 1968, to sell steroids or to possess them for the purpose of sale without a licence. The Government plan to introduce legislation at the earliest parliamentary opportunity to prohibit the supply of steroids to minors, and the Department of Health is currently conducting research into the extent of anabolic steroid use.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

### Parliamentary Questions

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total number of occasions on which the Minister for Overseas Development appeared at the Dispatch Box in Foreign Office questions to answer questions relating to overseas development and assistance to developing countries during the 1987-92 Parliament.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The Minister for Overseas Development appeared on 48 occasions.

### Sudan

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports have been received about the effects of the civil war in the Sudan and the number of refugees who have left the country; what arrangements have been made by the Government to assist with the relief effort; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** The civil war has had a devastating effect on southern Sudan. United Nations reports indicate the cash economy is non-existent; infrastructure, including communications systems, has broken down and transport is not available. Access to clean water, health and sanitation services is very limited. There are large numbers of internally displaced people.

Refugee movements in the south are complex. Last year 300,000 Sudanese refugees returned to southern Sudan from Ethiopia. This year about 20,000 refugees have crossed into northern Kenya.

Since 1989 we have provided £17·8 million to Operation Lifeline Sudan, the United Nations programme to provide relief assistance to the south. This year, Sudanese refugees will benefit from the £7 million we have pledged to help refugees in the Horn of Africa.

### Development Assistance

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much official development assistance was given to developing countries in 1991 as a percentage of gross national product.

**Mr. Lennox-Boyd:** United Kingdom official development assistance in 1991 was £1,841 million, which represented 0·32 per cent. of GNP. This maintains our average aid-GNP over the last five years at 0·30 per cent.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Fair Employment

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has of the existence of deliberate discrimination in Northern Ireland employment.

**Mr. Atkins:** The Fair Employment Tribunal is the body charged with the determination of cases of alleged discrimination in employment on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion. Similarly, industrial tribunals determine cases of alleged sex discrimination. The findings of these tribunals are a matter of public record.

### Maghaberry Prison

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners were charged with disciplinary offences and which offences following disturbances at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry on 23 March.

**Mr. Mates:** There were no disturbances at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry on 23 March.

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of strip searches

made on female prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry monthly since July 1971; what was the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; what prison contraband, smuggled items, or illegal correspondence were discovered in any search; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for each search.

**Mr. Mates:** The hon. Member's question is incapable of answer, since Her Majesty's prison Maghaberry was not opened until March 1986.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Environment Research Programmes

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to make the RRS James Clark Ross, the RSS Discovery, the RSS Charles Darwin and the RRS Challenger environmental research programmes available to schools.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** The Natural Environment Research Council arranges guided tours for school parties around its research vessels, during the limited time they are in United Kingdom ports. The tours include an introduction to the environmental research programmes supported by the particular vessel.

### Agencies

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the names, date of creation and numbers of staff employed by the independent executive agencies.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Agency* | *Launch date* | *Staff*[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Accounts Services Agency | 1 October 1991 | 90 |
| ADAS Agency | 1 April 1992 | 2,500 |
| Building Research Establishment | 2 April 1990 | 700 |
| Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments) | 1 April 1991 | 230 |
| Central Office of Information[2] | 5 April 1990 | 670 |
| Central Science Laboratory | 1 April 1992 | 370 |
| Central Statistical Office | 19 November 1991 | 1,090 |
| Central Veterinary Laboratory | 2 April 1990 | 590 |
| Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment[3] | 1 April 1991 | 600 |
| Civil Service College | 6 June 1989 | 230 |
| Companies House[2] | 3 October 1988 | 1,070 |
| Compensation Agency[4] | 1 April 1992 | 150 |
| Defence Research Agency | 1 April 1991 | 12,150 |
| Directorate General of Defence Accounts[3] | 1 April 1991 | 2,130 |
| Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency | 2 April 1990 | 4,580 |
| Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency[4] | 1 April 1992 | 250 |
| Driving Standards Agency | 2 April 1990 | 2,080 |
| Duke of York's Royal Military School | 1 April 1992 | 100 |
| DVOIT | 1 April 1992 | 590 |
| Employment Service | 2 April 1990 | 38,400 |
| Fire Service College[2] | 1 April 1992 | 160 |
| Forensic Science Service | 1 April 1991 | 600 |
| Historic Royal Palaces | 1 October 1989 | 330 |
| Historic Scotland | 1 April 1991 | 630 |
| HMSO[2] | 14 December 1988 | 3,250 |
| Hydrographic Office[3] | 6 April 1990 | 860 |
| Insolvency Service | 21 March 1990 | 1,470 |
| Intervention Board | 2 April 1990 | 980 |
| Laboratory of the Government Chemist | 30 October 1989 | 340 |
| Land Registry | 2 July 1990 | 9,800 |
| Medicines Control Agency | 1 July 1991 | 300 |
| Meteorological Office | 2 April 1990 | 2,390 |
| Military Survey[3] | 1 April 1991 | 1,300 |
| National Engineering Laboratory | 5 October 1990 | 390 |
| National Physical Laboratory | 3 July 1990 | 830 |
| National Weights and Measures Laboratory | 18 April 1989 | 50 |
| Natural Resources Institute | 2 April 1990 | 440 |
| Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation[3] | 1 April 1992 | 1,510 |
| NHS Estates | 1 April 1991 | 120 |
| Occupational Health Service | 2 April 1990 | 100 |
| Ordnance Survey | 1 May 1990 | 2,380 |
| Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland[4] | 1 April 1992 | 210 |
| Patent Office[2] | 1 March 1990 | 1,080 |
| Planing Inspectorate | 1 April 1992 | 630 |
| Public Record Office | 1 April 1992 | 440 |
| Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre | 6 July 1989 | 60 |
| Queen Victoria School | 1 April 1992 | 60 |
| Radiocommunications Agency | 2 April 1990 | 520 |
| RAF Maintenance[3] | 1 April 1991 | 13,300 |
| Rate Collection Agency[4] | 1 April 1991 | 270 |
| Recruitment and Assessment Services Agency | 1 April 1991 | 240 |
| Registers of Scotland | 6 April 1990 | 1,280 |

| Agency | Launch date | Staff[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Royal Mint[2] | 2 April 1990 | 1,020 |
| Scottish Agricultural Science Agency | 1 April 1992 | 140 |
| Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency | 1 April 1991 | 210 |
| Service Children's Schools (North West Europe)[3] | 1 April 1991 | 2,300 |
| Social Security Agency[4] | 1 July 1991 | 5,350 |
| Social Security Benefits Agency | 1 April 1991 | 63,100 |
| Social Security Contributions Agency | 1 April 1991 | 8,000 |
| Social Security Information Technology Services Agency | 2 April 1991 | 4,000 |
| Social Security Resettlement Agency | 24 May 1989 | 520 |
| Teachers' Pensions Agency | 1 April 1992 | 300 |
| The Buying Agency[2] | 1 November 1991 | 110 |
| Training and Employment Agency[4] | 2 April 1990 | 1,670 |
| Transport Research Laboratory | 1 April 1992 | 580 |
| United Kingdom Passport Agency | 2 April 1991 | 1,250 |
| Valuation Office | 30 September 1991 | 5,200 |
| Vehicle Certification Agency | 2 April 1990 | 80 |
| Vehicle Inspectorate[2] | 1 September 1988 | 1,820 |
| Veterinary Medicines Directorate | 2 April 1990 | 80 |
| Warren Spring Laboratory | 20 April 1989 | 310 |
| Wilton Park Conference Centre | 1 September 1991 | 30 |
| 72 in number | | 210,960 |
| Customs and Excise[5] (30 Executive Units) | 1 April 1991 | 26,800 |
| Inland Revenue[5] (34 Executive Offices) | 1 April 1992 | 62,100 |
| TOTAL[6] | | 299,860 |
| TOTAL CIVIL SERVANTS[7] | | 290,490 |

[1] October 1991 figures for Civil Servants and Armed Forces personnel. Casuals are excluded. Part-time staff are counted as half units.
[2] Trading Fund.
[3] Defence Support Agency.
[4] Northern Ireland Civil Service.
[5] Departments operating fully on 'Next Steps' lines. Staffing figure for Inland Revenue excludes the Valuation Office which is a free standing agency.
[6] Includes 8,070 Armed Forces personnel in Ministry of Defence Agencies, and 1,300 locally engaged staff in Service Children's Schools (North West Europe).
[7] Includes 7,900 Civil Servants in agencies of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

## TRANSPORT

### Channel Tunnel

**Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government response to the Transport Select Committee's second report, Session 1991-92, "Preparations for the Opening of the Channel Tunnel" H.C. 12—1, will be published; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government welcome the Committee's report. My right hon. Friend has today published the Government response—Cm. 1987. Copies have been tabled in the Journal Office and the Clerk of the Parliaments' Office. Copies have also been placed in the House Libraries.

### Thames River Services

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what forecasts have been made of the likely growth in *(a)* commuter traffic and *(b)* tourist traffic using river passenger services on the Thames; and what discussions his officials have had about an application for section 56 grant to invest in piers and vessels to accommodate growth in demand.

**Mr. Norris:** Forecasts provided to us by the Riverbus Partnership showed a projected growth in demand for Riverbus services from 400,000 per annum in 1991 to a peak of 750,000 per annum in 1993 with a gradual decline thereafter until 1997, when the demand is forecast to level off at about 400,000 per annum. I know of no forecasts of tourist traffic using other river services.

Ministers and officials have had several meetings with the Riverbus Partnership to discuss a possible application for a section 56 grant. Preliminary discussions were also held with another company contemplating setting up a service. Both have been told that grant would not be available in 1993-94.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy in respect of encouraging the development of river passenger transport in London; and what action he has taken in the last year to promote river passenger transport.

**Mr. Norris:** I should like to encourage greater use of the River Thames for both freight and passengers. I should welcome proposals from operators and others to develop services, including the means of financing them.

My officials have had discussion with river users and their representatives to explore the potential of the River Thames and its associated facilities. I intend that such discussions should continue.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he plans to take to safeguard the Riverbus services in the light of the impending withdrawal

of its operating subsidy by Olympia and York; and what information he has on the numbers using the service daily *(a)* overall and *(b)* to London city airport.

**Mr. Norris:** I have looked at the possibility of providing an operating subsidy to Riverbus. I have concluded that such a subsidy would not represent good value for money in transport terms. I understand that 228,000 passengers used Riverbus in the first five months of 1992. Of these, 14,000 travelled to the London City airport.

**Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received and what discussions he has had about the future of the Riverbus services.

**Mr. Norris:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have received representations from the owners of the London City airport, from the airport's managing director, from two airlines, from the Riverbus Partnership, from the Port of London Authority, from the Chelsea Reach Association, and from 14 hon. Members enclosing a letter from the chairman of Mowlem, owners of the London City Airport. There have been no formal discussions about Riverbus.

### South Circular Road

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the planned start on site and finish dates for the A205, south circular, Catford town centre relief road.

**Mr. Norris:** Until land acquisition is completed, it would be premature to forecast the timing of construction work.

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve consultation arrangements between his Department and the London borough councils through which the A205, south circular road passes, regarding all types of highway work and pedestrian safety.

**Mr. Norris:** I consider the present arrangements satisfactory. Frequent contact takes place between officials of the Department and individual boroughs on matters of mutual interest, including improvements to the roads for which the Secretary of State is responsible.

### Jubilee Line

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state *(a)* the current projected cost of the Jubilee line in current and 1989 prices, *(b)* the length of time over which private sector contributions are to be paid and from what source, *(c)* the proportion of the current cost, and 1989 cost that is now proposed to be covered from such contributions when discounted to a common base year and *(d)* the methods and assumptions on which the private sector contributions have been discounted.

**Mr. Norris:** The current projected cost of the Jubilee line extension is £1,420 million in 1989 prices and £1,828 million in current—cash—prices. Private sector contributions were promised by Olympia and York—O and Y—Heron Quays Developments Limited—HQDL—and British Gas—BG.

O and Y was to have contributed £400 million cash, comprising £40 million on 31 March 1992; £60 million on 31 March 1993; and a stream of payments over 24 years, or a single discounted payment, once the extension was opened. At the time the company went into administration, it had not completed its funding agreement with London Underground Limited—LUL—setting out the terms under which its contributions were to have been made.

HQDL was to have made a single payment of £2·4 million at November 1989 prices, uplifted by 10 per cent. per annum and payable in June 1992. The company, which is a joint venture company owned partly by O and Y and partly by Regalian Homes Limited, has told LUL it cannot proceed now that O and Y has gone into administration.

BG is to make contributions in cash and kind, estimated in 1989 to be worth £24·7 million. Some of those contributions are to be uplifted at 12 per cent. per annum to the dates on which they are paid. The detailed terms under which the contributions are to be paid, including the length of time over which they would be paid, is to be specified in the funding agreement with LUL, which is still to be negotiated.

We continue to look to the private sector to make these contributions so that the line may proceed. If the contributions were all forthcoming, the proportion of the extension's total cost covered would be just over 12 per cent. in 1989 prices or 24 per cent. of the current—cash—price. The HQDL and BG contributions have not been discounted as they were originally expressed in 1989 prices. The O and Y contribution has been discounted at 8 per cent. per annum.

## EDUCATION

### Schools (Effectiveness)

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions his Department is having concerning the most appropriate criteria to include in league tables when measuring schools' effectiveness.

**Mr. Patten:** Comparative tables will this year cover public examination results; next year we plan to include national curriculum assessment results, truancy rates and information about the educational and other routes taken by older pupils. We consulted widely on plans for 1992 and will do so again for 1993.

### Butlers Hill Infant School, Hucknall

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the Butlers Hill infant school, Hucknall.

**Mr. Forth:** Nottinghamshire LEA has submitted a bid for a supplementary credit approval to enable the school to be replaced. My right hon. Friend hopes to make an announcement soon about SCAs for the current year.

### Teachers

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had regarding the number of teacher posts for September 1992.

**Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had regarding teacher redundancies for September 1992.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend has received letters from a number of sources relating to the employment of teachers; a proportion of these refer to changes in numbers of teacher posts for September 1992.

### Standard Assessment Tasks

**Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with the National Association of Head Teachers regarding standard assessment tasks at key stage 1.

**Mr. Forth:** None.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects standard assessment tasks to be taken in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** We are currently consulting about the arrangements for assessing both seven and 14-year-olds in 1993, including about the timing of the national tests. My right hon. Friend expects shortly to reach final decisions about the testing arrangements for 1993 in the light of the consultations.

### English Curriculum

18. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the National Curriculum Council regarding the content of the English national curriculum.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

29. **Mr. Kilfoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with the National Association of Advisers in English and the National Association for the Teaching of English following their recent report on the English curriculum.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

### Grant-maintained Schools

20. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the subject of grant-maintained status from primary and secondary schools.

**Mr. Forth:** My right hon. Friend continues to receive views from numerous bodies and individuals on grant-maintained status.

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what modifications he has sought to the proposed admissions policies of schools seeking grant-maintained status in Essex; and what are the reasons in each case for the modifications.

**Mr. Forth:** I will write to my hon. Friend with the information she has requested.

### Local Management of Schools

21. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the impact of local management of schools on local authority-wide music provision; and if he will make a statement on the Government's future plans in this respect.

**Mr. Forth:** There is no direct relationship between the introduction of local management of schools and the level of music provision.

### Student Unions

22. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to announce the outcome of his Department's inquiry into student unions; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forman:** I plan to bring the current consultations on student unions to a close in the near future.

### Expenditure (Examination Results)

23. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the relationship between spending by local education authorities and examination results.

**Mr. Forth:** There is no straightforward relationship between spending by local education authorities and examination results; higher spending does not, of itself, guarantee better results.

### Hendon School

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils applied to enter Hendon grant-maintained school in 1992-93 and in 1988-89.

**Mr. Forth:** The Department does not collect centrally information on applications for admissions to grant-maintained schools. However, I understand from Hendon school that it has received 420 applications for admission in September 1992. The school admitted 103 pupils in 1988.

### Assessment

25. **Dr. Berry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he plans to review the arrangements for the assessment of pupils in the light of the proposals for Scotland.

**Mr. Forth:** No, we have no intention of abandoning a system that works.

### School Governors

26. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken to encourage parents to stand for election as school governors.

**Mr. Forth:** The Department is playing its part in efforts to attract new school governors this autumn, including parents. My right hon. Friend launched the "Schools Need Governors" campaign on 28 April. I have followed this up at a number of events designed to raise awareness of school governor issues and the satisfaction which membership of governing bodies can bring. We have appointed Mrs. Ann Holt to support and co-ordinate local authorities' recruitment plans. We have paid for the production of a leaflet and poster—translated into eight ethnic minority languages—for distribution to all schools and libraries in England and Wales. We are spending around £300,000 on the campaign, which I am confident will be successful.

## Nursery Education

27. **Ms. Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to ensure that adequate resources will be made available for nursery education provision throughout England and Wales for 1993-94.

**Mr. Forth:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 19 May, *Official Report*, column *107*.

## Parents Charter

28. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many copies of the parents charter have been distributed to parents.

**Mr. Forth:** Some 5·3 million copies, in English and ethnic minority languages, were requested by individuals and by the two thirds of schools which distributed copies direct to parents. More than 1 million further copies were distributed through main post offices and public libraries.

## Pupil:Teacher Ratios

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the average pupil:teacher ratio since May 1979; what was the October 1974 to May 1979 average: and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Forth:** The average overall PTR for the period January 1980 to January 1991 inclusive, the latest date for which full information is available was 17·7. For the period January 1975 to January 1979 inclusive the average overall PTR was 19·6.

## Higher Education Funding Councils

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what study he is making of the number of Scottish students attending English universities after the establishment of higher education funding councils.

**Mr. Forman:** My Department is making no such study. Places for home students at higher education institutions in England will be funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England irrespective of domicile. The same principle will apply to funding for places at institutions in Scotland and Wales by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

## Single-Sex Education

**Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children of school age receive single-sex education in *(a)* Romford, *(b)* the London borough of Havering and *(c)* England and Wales generally; and what assessment he has made of the extent to which this provides adequate choice for parents in the state sector.

**Mr. Forth:** Information for schools in Romford is not available centrally. Information on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales. In January 1991, the percentages of children of compulsory school age receiving education in maintained single sex schools in Havering local education authority and England as a whole are 9·2 and 4·7 respectively. It is for each local education authority to determine the demand for single sex education in its area.

## Statementing

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the arrangements for the statementing of children with special education needs; and what discussions he has had on the provision of medical services to children attending special education establishments in the Wigan metropolitan borough.

**Mr. Forth:** On 11 June my noble Friend the Minister of State said in another place that the Government had undertaken a fundamental review of the Education Act 1981, and announced the Government's proposals to legislate to improve present arrangements for assessments and statements. We shall consult widely on the detail of our proposals.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has ministerial responsibility for the provision of medical services.

## Special Needs

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many children in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster and *(c)* Rotherham are currently diagnosed as suffering from dyslexia;

(2) how many curriculum support assistants are currently employed for special needs children in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster and *(c)* Rotherham;

(3) how many people qualified in dealing with dyslexia are currently employed in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster, *(c)* Rotherham and *(d)* nationally;

(4) how many children are currently classed as remedial in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster and *(c)* Rotherham; and if he will express these figures as a percentage of the national average;

(5) how many children are currently undergoing the statementing process in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster and *(c)* Rotherham expressed as specific numbers and as a percentage of the national average;

(6) how many children are assessed as having special needs in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Rotherham and *(c)* Doncaster; and what amount of resources is currently allocated for children with special needs in each of these areas.

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not collected centrally.

## Training Grants

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the local education authorities who have claimed grant for education, support and training at 65 per cent. on the full cost of funding the initial training of an educational psychologist in circumstances where the individual involved in such training has contributed 35 per cent. of the costs.

**Mr. Forth:** Local education authorities may only claim grant under the grants for education support and training programme in respect of eligible spending which they themselves incur. They may not claim grant in respect of costs met by the individual being trained. The Department has asked local education authorities to confirm that their claims have been prepared on this basis, but has not yet received all replies.

## Psychologists

**Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many educational psychologists are employed in *(a)* Barnsley, *(b)* Doncaster and *(c)* Rotherham expressed as a specific figure and as a percentage of the national average.

**Mr. Forth:** The table gives in column 1 full-time equivalent numbers of educational psychologists employed by the local education authorities in question in January 1992. Column 2 expresses these as a percentage of the average number employed per English LEA. The figures are provided in the form requested, but are not weighted to take account of variations between LEAs in the numbers of children of school age for which they are responsible.

| | *Number of[1] Educational Psychologists (FTE)* | *Percentage[2] of National Average Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Barnsley | 4·5 | 32·6 |
| Doncaster | 9·0 | 65·2 |
| Rotherham | 10·3 | 74·6 |
| England | 1,505·2 | — |

## School Expenditure

**Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list in rank order the shire county education authorities' spending per pupil in secondary schools, relative to the proportion of secondary school pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A to C, and the national averages for the most recent year available.

**Mr. Forth:** The table shows school-based spending per-secondary pupil in shire counties in financial year 1989-90, and the average percentage of school leavers obtaining five or more grades A, B or C at GCSE in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

*Shire counties 1989-90*

| | *Net institutional expenditure per secondary pupil 1989-90 (£)* | *Percentage of leavers with five or more GCSE/O/CSE grades A to C* | *Rank (passes)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Derbyshire | 1,975 | 26·9 | 33 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1,955 | 24·7 | 38 |
| Cleveland | 1,915 | 27·3 | 31 |
| Hertfordshire | 1,900 | 36·1 | 6 |
| Leicestershire | 1,900 | 28·4 | 27 |
| Shropshire | 1,855 | 32·4 | 12 |
| Buckinghamshire | 1,850 | 41·2 | 1 |
| Cumbria | 1,845 | 29·6 | 23 |
| Suffolk | 1,820 | 26·6 | 34 |
| Bedfordshire | 1,815 | 27·3 | 31 |
| Lancashire | 1,810 | 29·4 | 25 |
| Oxfordshire | 1,810 | 29·8 | 21 |
| Norfolk | 1,810 | 27·8 | 29 |
| Essex | 1,800 | 30·9 | 17 |
| Avon | 1,800 | 30·2 | 19 |
| Hampshire | 1,790 | 32·8 | 11 |
| Staffordshire | 1,790 | 26·6 | 34 |
| Warwickshire | 1,770 | 30·9 | 17 |
| East Sussex | 1,765 | 36·5 | 5 |
| North Yorkshire | 1,760 | 37·6 | 4 |
| Humberside | 1,760 | 23·4 | 39 |
| West Sussex | 1,745 | 39·6 | 3 |
| Somerset | 1,745 | 31·4 | 16 |
| Gloucestershire | 1,735 | 34·3 | 7 |
| Berkshire | 1,735 | 32·4 | 12 |
| Durham | 1,735 | 26·3 | 37 |
| Cheshire | 1,715 | 33·3 | 10 |
| Devon | 1,710 | 29·5 | 24 |
| Wiltshire | 1,700 | 30·1 | 20 |
| Cornwall including Scilly | 1,690 | 33·8 | 8 |
| Northamptonshire | 1,685 | 27·8 | 29 |
| Surrey | 1,675 | 40·7 | 2 |
| Northumberland | 1,645 | 33·4 | 9 |
| Cambridgeshire | 1,640 | 29·8 | 21 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 1,635 | 32·1 | 14 |
| Dorset | 1,635 | 31·5 | 15 |
| Lincolnshire | 1,630 | 26·6 | 34 |
| Isle of Wight | 1,575 | 28·1 | 28 |
| Kent | 1,570 | 28·9 | 26 |
| England | 1,855 | 28·6 | |

*Note:* Per pupil expenditure figures are derived from LEAs' returns of their spending to the Department for the Environment and their pupil numbers to the Department of Education. Figures are for 1989-90, the latest year for which actual spending information is available. Net institutional expenditure covers spending on salaries and wages, recurrent premises costs, books and equipment, and certain other supplies and services. It excludes spending on LEA administration, home to school transport, school meals and financing costs of capital expenditure.

## DEFENCE

### Gulf Medal

**Sir John Wheeler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the metal specification of the Gulf medal; when it was authorised to be made; when the first issue to recipients was made and when the issue will be completed; if he will make a statement about the quality of the production and speed of issue; and whether he intends to seek competitive tenders for future issues of medals and awards.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Gulf medal is made of cupro-nickel. The Command Paper for the Gulf medal was approved by Her Majesty the Queen on 10 August 1991, and it was published and laid before Parliament on 20 August 1991. The order for the manufacture of the medals was placed later that month; the first medals were produced by the Royal Mint in October 1991 and the first issues made in November 1991. The initial dispatch rate of 1,000 medals per week has now been more than doubled, and it is expected that the bulk of issues of the medal will be completed by the end of July 1992. The Government have been satisfied with the quality of the medal produced by the Royal Mint. The possibility of seeking competitive tenders for future medal issues is under consideration.

### Nuclear Testing

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a study of cataracts in British nuclear test participants will be undertaken.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The National Radiological Protection Board considers it to be impracticable to undertake a study of cataracts in all 20,000 test participants. It has, however, agreed to carry out an investigation on a small group of volunteers from the test veterans associations.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will commission a study into potential genetic effects of nuclear contamination in the families of British nuclear test participants.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** A study is to be undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board in conjunction with the Childhood Cancer Research Group, and other organisations into cancer in the children of radiation workers included in the National Register for Radiation Workers. In the light of this study MoD will consider whether to commission such a study for British test participants.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many body scans have been undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board as part of its follow-on survey dealing with British nuclear test participants.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what period the Blue Books, recording radiation exposure in British nuclear test participants, have been compiled.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** The Blue Books record radiation exposures of test participants in the United Kingdom nuclear weapons test programme, both atmospheric and underground, for the period 1952-67.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what authorisation has been given by individuals, who served as participants in British nuclear tests, for their Blue Book entries to be made available to the National Radiological Protection Board.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** None.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what efforts have been made to inform British nuclear test participants of their Blue Book entries and of their rights to access these personal records.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** As the vast majority of test participants received a zero dose, it would be inappropriate to contact each service man individually. Test participants are entitled under suitable privacy arrangements to receive the information on their dose records, held in the Blue Books.

### RAF Tain

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will halt the use of the air weapons range at RAF Tain by USAF F-111E aircraft until such time as he has received and published the findings of the inquiry into the recent inadvertent dropping of five practice bombs.

**Mr. Archie Hamilton:** United States Air Force F-111E temporarily ceased using RAF Tain range from the afternoon of 11 June, after an incident in which four practice bombs were irregularly released. This followed the irregular release of one practice bomb on 4 June. USAF investigations into the two incidents found that they had been caused by unrelated technical malfunctions. All F-111E aircraft were checked for both types of fault and were cleared to begin using the range again on 17 June.

### Defence Export Services Organisation

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual salary range applicable to the Head of the Defence Export Services Organisation.

**Mr. Aitken:** The present Head of Defence Export Services, Mr. Alan Thomas, is on secondment from Raytheon Europe, Ltd., which pays his salary and is reimbursed by the Ministry of Defence. His current salary is £123,220 a year, subject to annual review, and Mr. Thomas is eligible for a performance bonus within an annual maximum of £30,000.

### Budget

**Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what was the budget for development of Battlefield IFF for each of the last five years; and what is the budget for each of the next five years.

**Mr. Aitken:** We have funded a number of technology programmes within the Defence Research Agency which are applicable to a range of potential equipments, including Battlefield IFF, although the expenditure applicable solely to Battlefield IFF cannot be separately identified. The Defence Research Agency is now undertaking a research programme aimed at assessing short-term solutions as well as options for the longer term for such a system.

We have not commenced the development of a Battlefield IFF because it has not yet been possible to

identify a secure and effective solution which would match the complexities of the modern battlefield. As far as our budget for the next five years is concerned, it is not our practice to reveal the details of our forward programme.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Housing Finance, Harrogate

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total debt in the housing account of the Harrogate borough council and the servicing costs for the 1991-92 financial year.

**Mr. Baldry:** No information is held centrally on a split of total authority debt which relates to housing, nor of the split of servicing costs. Local housing authorities are however required to maintain a housing revenue account where debt servicing costs are charged for housing. These costs are based upon debt figures calculated by formula.

The estimated average debt used in the formula for charging servicing costs to the housing revenue account of Harrogate borough council for 1991-92 is about £18·1 million. The provisional debt servicing costs for the same year are £2·46 million.

### Cumbria

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *342*, whether he will publish the recommendations of the report by Cambridge Economic Consultants into the south and west Cumbrian economies.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** No.

### City Action

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure showing the running costs of each city action team, excluding the funding programmes, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The running costs for city action teams are shared by the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of Employment and the Department of the Environment. These are estimated as follows:

*Table A—running costs at current prices*

| *CAT* | *1987-88 (£000's)* | *1988-89 (£000's)* | *1989-90 (£000's)* | *1990-91 (£000's)* | *1991-92 (£000's)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nottingham/Leicester/Derby | n/a[1] | 183 | 183 | 183 | 271 |
| Liverpool | 204 | 204 | 204 | 204 | 223 |
| London | 190 | 254 | 226 | 226 | 299 |
| Tyne and Wear | 132 | 132 | 165 | 242 | 242 |
| Leeds/Bradford | n/a[1] | 121 | 146 | 176 | 215 |
| Birmingham | 40 | 106 | 127 | 137 | 177 |
| Manchester/Salford | 127 | 124 | 118 | 155 | 191 |
| Cleveland | 40 | 38 | 62 | 71 | 90 |
| *Table B—running costs at 1987-88 prices* | | | | | |
| Nottingham/Leicester/Derby | n/a[1] | 119 | 119 | 119 | 186 |
| Liverpool | 140 | 140 | 140 | 140 | 150 |
| London | 125 | 171 | 150 | 150 | 198 |
| Tyne and Wear | 90 | 90 | 113 | 166 | 166 |
| Leeds/Bradford | n/a[1] | 83 | 100 | 121 | 147 |
| Birmingham | 27 | 73 | 87 | 87 | 121 |
| Manchester/Salford | 87 | 85 | 81 | 106 | 131 |
| Cleveland | 27 | 26 | 43 | 48 | 60 |

[1] Leeds/Bradford and Nottingham/Leicester/Derby CATs were launched in March 1998.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure on each city action team by his Department for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Responsibility for city action teams transferred from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of the Environment in December 1989. City action teams expenditure from 1989 has been as follows:

TABLE A
*Current prices*

| *City action team* | *1989-90 £'000s* | *1990-91 £'000s* | *1991-92 £'000s* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nottingham/Leicester/Derby | 870 | 895 | 888 |
| Liverpool | 1,356 | 1,118 | 1,234 |
| London | 1,057 | 1,230 | 1,129 |
| Tyne and Wear | 1,372 | 1,118 | 1,298 |
| Leeds/Bradford | 800 | 1,006 | 846 |
| Birmingham | 690 | 895 | 982 |
| Manchester/Salford | 572 | 1,006 | 908 |
| Cleveland | 784 | 1,342 | 1,442 |
| TOTALS | [1]7,501 | 8,610 | 8,727 |

[1] A total of 63 per cent. was spent after the transfer from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of the Environment (from 19 December 1989 to 31 March 1990).

TABLE B
*1987-88 prices*

| *City action team* | *1989-90 £'000s* | *1990-91 £'000s* | *1991-92 £'000s* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nottingham/Leicester/Derby | 629 | 647 | 642 |
| Liverpool | 981 | 809 | 893 |
| London | 765 | 890 | 816 |
| Tyne and Wear | 992 | 809 | 939 |
| Leeds/Bradford | 578 | 728 | 612 |
| Birmingham | 499 | 647 | 711 |
| Manchester/Salford | 414 | 728 | 657 |
| Cleveland | 567 | 971 | 1,043 |
| TOTALS | [1]5,425 | 6,229 | 6,313 |

[1] A total of 63 per cent. was spent after the transfer from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of the Environment (from 19 December 1989 to 31 March 1990).

## Newsletter

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of his Department's environmental protection group research newsletter, issued in March, were printed; to which organisations or individuals it is circulated; what assessment he has made of its effectiveness based on experience gained from the 1991 newsletter; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** More than 400 of the 1992 environmental protection research newsletters have been printed to date. It is circulated to private industry, public corporations, including local authorities, environmental publications, research councils, educational establishments and individuals.

Judgment of the effectiveness of the newsletter is based on the significant number of inquiries received by the Department, and the consequential expressions of interest in applying for inclusion on the tender list for contracts listed in the newsletter.

My Department considers the newsletter an effective device for bringing the formal environmental protection programme of the Department to the attention of the research community.

## Urban Programme

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure on the urban programme broken down into economic, environmental and social categories and cross-referenced to standard regions, showing Greater London as a separate region, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** I will write to the hon. Member with this information.

## Enterprise Zones

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure from his Department, to each enterprise zone, including tax reliefs, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The table shows annual costs for rate revenue forgone in United Kingdom enterprise zones from 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1990. No comparable figures are available for other enterprise zone allowances.

*Enterprise Zones—Compensation for Rates Revenue forgone*

| *Costs (£'000s)* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | | *1989-90* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *(a) = (b)* | *(a)* | *(b)* | *(a)* | *(b)* |
| *England* | | | | | |
| Allerdale | 423 | 585 | 627 | 905 | 1,034 |
| Corby | 3,464 | 4,344 | 4,658 | 4,711 | 5,384 |
| Dudley | 4,141 | 4,607 | 4,940 | 7,570 | 8,651 |
| Glanford | 111 | 275 | 295 | 486 | 555 |
| Hartlepool | 871 | 1,116 | 1,197 | 1,455 | 1,663 |
| Isle of Dogs | 6,463 | 7,763 | 8,324 | 12,938 | 14,786 |
| Middlesbrough | 741 | 846 | 907 | 1,142 | 1,305 |
| North East Lancs | 916 | 1,556 | 1,668 | 2,438 | 2,786 |
| North West Kent | 2,175 | 3,171 | 3,400 | 4,361 | 4,984 |
| Rotherham | 1,205 | 2,535 | 2,718 | 2,553 | 2,918 |
| Salford/Trafford | 5,747 | 7,782 | 8,344 | 9,790 | 11,189 |
| Scunthorpe | 1,320 | 2,881 | 3,089 | 3,683 | 4,209 |
| Speke | 2,015 | 2,414 | 2,588 | 2,919 | 3,336 |
| Telford | 1,890 | 2,332 | 2,501 | 4,173 | 4,769 |
| Tyneside | 10,067 | 10,455 | 11,210 | 14,586 | 16,670 |
| Wakefield | 1,399 | 1,572 | 1,686 | 1,828 | 2,089 |
| Wellingborough | 1,810 | 1,869 | 2,004 | 2,035 | 2,326 |
| *Wales* | | | | | |
| Delyn | 607 | 622 | 667 | 826 | 944 |
| Milford Haven | 582 | 631 | 677 | 779 | 890 |
| Swansea | 2,249 | 2,653 | 2,845 | 3,777 | 4,317 |
| *Scotland* | | | | | |
| Clydebank | 2,753 | 2,595 | 2,783 | 2,747 | 3,139 |
| Inverclyde | — | (c) | | (c) | |
| Invergordon | 366 | 209 | 224 | n/a | |
| Tayside | 1,448 | 1,214 | 1,302 | 1,902 | 2,174 |
| *Northern Ireland* | | | | | |
| Belfast | 1,304 | 1,640 | 1,759 | 1,989 | 2,273 |
| Londonderry | 677 | 733 | 786 | 804 | 919 |

(a) actual outturn
(b) 1987-88 prices
(c) included in Clydebank total

## City Grant

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table of expenditure on city grant, cross-referenced to standard regions, showing Greater London as a separate region, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** City grant was introduced in May 1988. Details of expenditure by region and financial year after that date are as follows:

*Amount of city grant approved by region—prices at date of approval.*

| *Region* | *1988-89 £ million* | *1989-90 £ million* | *1990-91 £ million* | *1991-92 £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Midlands | 5·34 | 19·34 | 14·22 | 15·84 |
| North West | 2·65 | 24·33 | 15·85 | 27·67 |
| Northern | 1·50 | 6·45 | 2·39 | 9·01 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1·03 | 5·07 | 16·60 | 11·87 |
| London | 5·57 | 5·66 | 2·56 | 7·58 |
| East Midlands | 9·33 | 4·34 | 1·73 | 8·23 |
| South West | — | — | 0·26 | 4·83 |
| | 25·42 | 65·[illegible] | 53·61 | 85·03 |

*Amount of City Grant approved—1988-89 prices*

| *Region* | *1988-89 £ million* | *1989-90 £ million* | *1990-91 £ million* | *1991-92 £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| West Midlands | 5·34 | 18·14 | 12·33 | 12·84 |
| North West | 2·65 | 22·82 | 13·74 | 22·42 |
| Northern | 1·50 | 6·05 | 2·07 | 7·30 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 1·03 | 4·76 | 14·40 | 9·62 |
| London | 5·57 | 5·31 | 2·22 | 6·14 |
| East Midlands | 9·33 | 4·07 | 1·50 | 6·67 |
| South West | — | — | 0·23 | 3·91 |
| | 25·42 | 61·15 | 46·49 | 68·90 |

## Travellers

**Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions in 1991-92 local authorities reported difficulties to his Department as a result of the occupation of land in their ownership by gipsies and other itinerants.

**Mr. Baldry:** Local authorities in England submit to the Department a biannual statistical return showing the numbers of gipsy caravans camped illegally on private and publicly owned land within their areas. Copies of the latest return, for January 1992, are in the Library. Authorities are not required to report to the Department individual cases of unauthorised camping by gipsies and other travellers.

## Local Government Officers (Pensions)

**Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average annual pension paid to retired local government officers in England and Wales.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Based on available data as at 31 March 1991, the average annual pension paid to retired local government officers in England and Wales, under the local government superannuation scheme, was £2,562.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Churchill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his decisions on final caps for the authorities which he has designated for capping; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Howard:** I have laid before the House a draft order, under section 104 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, setting out my decisions on the final caps for the eight authorities which have challenged my proposed caps and put forward higher alternatives. For the two authorities—Langbaurgh and Middlesbrough—which accepted the caps I originally proposed for them I have confirmed their caps at the level originally proposed.

For each of the challenging authorities, I have considered all the available relevant information, including the case made to me by those authorities in support of a higher cap, before taking my decisions. For Cheltenham, Gloucester, Greenwich, Hillingdon and Lambeth I have decided to confirm the caps which I initially proposed.

In the case of the other three authorities I consider that some relaxation would be justified. I have decided to increase Basildon's cap by £1·95 million, Gloucestershire's by £2·59 million and Warwickshire's by £4 million. The caps that I have now decided are, in my view, reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned.

The caps for each of the designated authorities and the resulting reductions in charges are as follows:

| *Authority* | *Final Cap £ million* | *Reduction in charge £* |
|---|---|---|
| Basildon | 22·10 | 41 |
| Cheltenham | 9·91 | 12 |
| Gloucester | 10·15 | 3 |
| Gloucestershire | 320·50 | 18 |
| Greenwich | 220·04 | 56 |
| Hillingdon | 166·27 | 5 |
| Langbaurgh | 16·50 | 18 |
| Lambeth | 328·79 | 23 |
| Middlesbrough | 20·20 | 14 |
| Warwickshire | 296·99 | 8 |

## UNCED

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the official United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 9 June, [*Official Report*, column *147*.]

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

## Members' Employment Status

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to allow hon. Members to revert to self-employed status.

**Mr. Newton:** I have no plans to do so.

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent representations he has received about allowing hon. Members to regain their self-employed status.

**Mr. Newton:** None, other than those implied by my hon. Friend's questions.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Residential Care

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 9 June, *Official Report*, column *136*, what studies his Department has undertaken of the proportion of income support for people in residential care required for *(a)* living support, *(b)* housing support and *(c)* care.

**Mr. Burt:** None. No study has been made by the DSS of specific items of expenditure within income support. The Price Waterhouse survey commissioned by the Department and published in October 1990 did make a distinction between running costs and capital costs. A copy is in the Library.

### Unclaimed Benefits

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he could give an estimate of the annual amount and category of social security benefits which are not claimed; and what measures will be taken to make people aware of what benefits they are entitled to.

**Mr. Burt:** The latest available information is contained in the estimates of take-up of income-related benefits for 1987, copies of which are in the Library. The Department tries to ensure that people are in a position to make informed choices on whether to claim, but does not have a legal duty to advise people to follow one course rather than another. Social security legislation clearly places the onus of claiming on individuals. One of the major priorities of its Benefits Agency is to enable people to establish their eligibility by making available information which is comprehensive, accurate and easy to understand, and to seek to ensure that claims are handled helpfully and efficiently.

### Young People

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he will take in response to the recommendations of the Social Security Advisory Committee regarding the needs of young people.

**Mr. Burt:** We have read and are carefully considering the SSAC report in respect of administrative arrangements. The Department has already implemented a number of initiatives aimed at easing access to benefit for young people and at ensuring help is available to those at risk. Benefit arrangements are monitored on a continuing basis and are always under review.

### Overseas Pensioners

**Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of unfreezing the retirement pensions of those now resident overseas but entitled to receive such pensions so that they are eligible for that same sum they would have received had they remained in the United Kingdom.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The estimated additional cost of paying United Kingdom retirement and widows pensions to beneficiaries living abroad at the same rate of benefit which they would have been paid had they remained in the United Kingdom is £275 million a year at 1992 rates. A separate figure for retirement pensioners only is not readily available.

### Disability

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the claim by Florence Muriel Marshall, NI No. ZS 506176D for disability living allowance was submitted; when it is to be resolved; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Scott:** The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and copies will be placed in the Library and the Public Information Office.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants for *(a)* residential care and *(b)* nursing home care there were in each region in May 1991.

**Mr. Burt:** Information in the form requested is not available. Such information as is available is in the table, taken from the May 1991 annual statistical inquiry, published on 19 June 1992.

| | *Residential care (thousands)* | *Nursing homes (thousands)* |
|---|---|---|
| England | 123·3 | 75·8 |
| Scotland | 8·4 | 9·1 |
| Wales | 7·1 | 8·8 |
| Great Britain | 138·8 | 93·7 |

### Personal Pension Plans

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the annual sums paid to providers of personal pension plans under the Social Security Act 1986 in respect of rebates and subsidies for contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme in each of the financial years including 1991-92 that the Act has been in force.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information is in the table.

*Payments in respect of personal pensions used for contracting out of SERPS*

| *Year of payment* | *NI rebates £ million* | *Incentives £ million* | *Tax refund £ million* | *Total £ million* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1988-89 | 295 | [1]— | 37 | 332 |
| 1989-90 | 1,712 | 685 | 205 | 2,602 |
| 1990-91 | 1,492 | 512 | 172 | 2,176 |
| 1991-92 | 1,777 | 599 | 204 | 2,580 |
| Totals | 5,276 | 1,796 | 618 | 7,690 |

[1] First payments of the incentive were made in April 1989.
*Source:* Contributions Agency: 100 per cent. count of payments made.

### Water Charges

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy for assisting with water charges claimants with dependent children.

**Mr. Burt:** For most people expenditure on water is one of many items to be taken into account when managing a budget. Movements in the cost of water are incorporated in the index used to uprate the income-related benefits, including income support.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of households in England are dependent on housing benefit; and how this has changed since the current system of housing benefit was introduced.

**Mr. Burt:** The most recent estimate, for May 1991, is that 17 per cent. of households in England receive some of their income from housing benefit—rent rebates and allowances. The corresponding figures for previous years are 18 per cent. for 1988 and 17 per cent. for both 1989 and 1990.

### National Insurance

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the year end balance of the national insurance fund in each year from 31 March 1985 showing the effect of payments made to the fund under section 16 of the Social Security Act 1990 and section 13 of the Employment Act 1990.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The table details the year-end balances of the national insurance fund from 31 March 1985. Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available.

Under section 16 of the Social Security Act 1990, payments were made to the fund from 1 April 1990 and amounted to £1,268 million for the year ending 31 March 1991.

Section 13 of the Employment Act 1990 abolished the former redundancy fund on 31 January 1991 and transferred its assets and liabilities to the national insurance fund on that day. This resulted in a one-off payment to the fund of £914·5 million for the year ending 31 March 1991.

Those sums were employed in the day-to-day running of the fund, together with its other income, and have contributed to the end-of-year balance shown.

| *Year* | *Balance at end of year £'000s* |
|---|---|
| 1984-85 | 4,977,510 |
| 1985-86 | 5,293,024 |
| 1986-87 | 5,706,966 |
| 1987-88 | 7,287,620 |
| 1988-89 | 10,368,808 |
| 1989-90 | 10,307,139 |
| 1990-91 | 11,791,856 |

### Family Credit

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made with the investigation into the position of family credit applications by self-employed persons; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Burt:** The research being undertaken by the social policy research unit at York university into family credit and the self-employed is a multi-staged exercise. The draft report on that part of the study relating to the method of the assessment of income from self-employment is expected during the summer. The draft final report of the whole study is expected in spring 1993.

### Maxwell Pension Funds

**Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what contributions have been made to the trust fund set up by his Department for the benefit of Maxwell pension fund members.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The formal arrangements for establishing the trust fund are currently in hand and we shall be announcing details of the first contribution shortly.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column *315*, if he will list the number of people, other than those in the Maxwell pension schemes, whose pensions are threatened because the assets of these schemes are not able to meet the pension payments and future commitments; how many schemes are involved; and what examination has been made of how far problems have arisen because of ineffective management, improper management or some other reason.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information requested is not routinely available, in the form requested, from the 300,000 occupational pension schemes currently in operation. Safeguards exist in trust law to protect the interests of members of schemes. The trustees have a duty to act at all times in the interests of all the beneficiaries of the scheme in accordance with the trust deed.

In addition, in the case of a scheme that is used for contracting out of SERPS, the Occupational Pensions Board is required to satisfy itself that the schemes' resources are sufficient to meet the guaranteed minimum pension liability to members. To satisfy themselves that this is the case the board relies on certificates signed by actuaries and submitted to them every three and a half years. Additionally, in the case of self-administered schemes, an annual statement, signed by the scheme administrator, auditor or trustees, is required concerning the audit of scheme accounts, the receipt of contributions, and any self-investment or concentration of investment.

A detailed analysis of scheme management is not normally carried out by the Department but the exceptional nature of the problems surrounding the Maxwell pension schemes has led to close links being established between this Department and those schemes.

### Age Allowance

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to implement the proposed increase from 25p to £1 per week in the age allowance for pensioners aged over 80 years.

**Miss Widdecombe:** The age addition of 25p which is awarded to all those aged 80 or over and receiving a state retirement pension remains unchanged. From April 1992 those receiving income support aged 80 or over—or younger disabled pensioners—benefited from an increase in the higher pensioner premium of £1 for single people and £1·50 for couples. We believe that increasing the premium in this way, and thereby helping pensioners on low incomes, is a more effective use of resources than increasing the existing 25p age addition for all pensioners aged 80 and over regardless of individual need.

### Registered Disabled

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total number of registered disabled people in the United Kingdom with *(a)* disabilities in one arm and *(b)* a missing upper limb for the last year in which figures are available.

**Mr. Yeo:** I have been asked to reply.

This information is not held centrally and is not available in the form requested. Information on the prevalence of different types of disability is given in the reports published in 1988-89 on the survey of disability carried out by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Copies are available in the Library.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Environmental Contract

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department issued the most recent edition of its "Environmental Contract: A Guide for Business Directory"; how many copies were printed and what cost; and what is his assessment of the effectiveness of the directory based on experience gained with the 1991 edition.

**Mr. Leigh:** The second and most recent edition of "Environmental Contract: A Guide for Business" was published mid-March 1992. A total of 27,000 copies were produced at a cost of £43,000.

The guide has been welcomed by representatives of business. All 30,000 copies of the 1991 edition were distributed and as a measure of its success to date more than 11,000 copies of the second edition have been requested.

### Inspectors' Reports

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions his Department has had with industry over the publication of annual environmental reports for companies.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The Department maintains close contact with industry on a range of environmental issues including the reporting of environmental performance. I welcome the growing trend for companies to report on their environmental performance. Companies are best placed, in the light of individual circumstances, to determine the frequency and scope of environmental reports.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns *154-55*, if he will list the reports which remain unpublished and those he intends to publish.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The table lists all reports set out in my answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, columns *154-55* which remain unpublished. A substantial interim report on Dunlop Holdings was published on 17 February 1981. The decision whether to publish the reports marked with an asterisk remains under consideration and the reports of all inspectors appointed since 1 January 1986 have either been published or remain under consideration.

| *Date of appointment* | *Company name* | *Date of report* |
|---|---|---|
| 25 July 1980 | Dunlop Holdings Ltd. | 10 March 1981[2]<br>12 November 1981[3] |
| 4 September 1980 | Euroseas Securities Ltd. | 5 March 1985 |
| 24 August 1981 | Riafield Ltd. | 30 December 1983 |
| 11 November 1981 | Corporate Management Planning Ltd. | 24 September 1986 |
| 8 March 1982 | Euroflame Holding plc | 27 June 1987 |
| 25 March 1982 | Pharmaceutex (IV Fluid) Ltd.<br>Drivehouse Ltd.<br>Furdrove Ltd. | 4 June 1986 |
| 10 May 1982 | Cubar Construction Ltd. | 28 August 1984 |
| 19 November 1982 | Signal Life Assurance Co. Ltd. | 16 November 1988 |
| 11 March 1983 | Graylow Holdings Ltd.<br>Link Service Stations Ltd. | 28 November 1989* |
| | British Anzani plc | 28 November 1989* |
| 4 October 1983 | Bank Street Securities Ltd. | 28 November 1989* |
| | Pennine Commercial Holdings plc | 28 November 1989[1]* |
| 25 February 1983 | Hartley Baird plc | 21 December 1983 |
| 16 February 1984 | Medway Secondary Metals Ltd. | 21 October 1987* |
| 9 May 1985 | Hartley Baird plc | 23 May 1986 |
| 28 November 1986 | Guinness plc | 24 November 1988[1]* |
| 20 October 1988 | Consolidated Gold Fields plc | 13 January 1989[1]*<br>5 April 1989[2]* |
| 26 May 1989 | Blue Arrow plc | 4 June 1991* |

| Date of appointment | Company name | Date of report |
|---|---|---|
| 23 June 1989 | The Bestwood plc<br>Atlanta Fund Managers Ltd. | 26 March 1991[4] |

[1] Interim.
[2] Second Interim.
[3] Final.

### Export Licences

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy on sharing information on specific export licences with *(a)* his Department's counterpart offices in other EC member states, *(b)* its counterpart offices in other COCOM countries and *(c)* its counterpart offices in NATO nations.

**Mr. Needham:** Information contained in applications for export licences is treated as commercially confidential. However, contact is regularly made with other Governments in cases where we wish to ensure effective enforcement of export controls.

### Research and Development

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will introduce legislation to require companies in their annual accounts to show the percentage of turnover spent on research and development.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No. Under SSAP 13, large companies already show spend on research and development in their accounts and the Accounting Standards Board's recently published proposals that companies should include an operating and financial review in annual reports build on this.

### Profit Forecasts

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to require large public limited companies to publish profit forecasts in their annual accounts.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

### Statutory Definitions

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to provide a statutory definition of asset;

(2) what plans he has to provide a statutory definition of profit.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** None.

### Joint Disciplinary Scheme

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will appoint an independent commission to examine the workings of the joint disciplinary scheme.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No.

### Cadbury Committee

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what evidence he submitted to the Cadbury committee on corporate governance.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** I have not submitted any written evidence. However, a representative of my Department has attended meetings of the committee as an observer.

### Bonus Payments

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to require shareholders to be informed of the bonuses paid to company executives.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** Details of directors' service contracts over one year are, with some exceptions, required under the Companies Act 1985 to be made available for inspection by shareholders. In addition, aggregate details of directors' emoluments, with individual figures for the chairman and most highly paid director, have to be set out in the notes to the annual accounts. I do not propose legislation requiring further disclosure of individual directors' emoluments.

### Accounting Practices

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to prevent companies from capitalising interest paid as an asset in their balance sheets.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** This issue is best dealt with through an accounting standard.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will appoint an independent commission to investigate the impact of accounting practices on short-termism.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** No. The Accounting Standards Board's recent discussion paper proposing the inclusion in annual reports of an operating and financial review, in which managers might discuss in a structured way some of the main factors underlying the performance and financial position shown in the financial statements, makes a useful contribution to this debate.

### Directors (Misconduct)

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints about the unfit conduct of directors were submitted to the Insolvency Service in 1990 and 1991; in how many cases legal proceedings were undertaken; and in how many cases disqualification orders were made.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** In the calendar years 1990 and 1991 there were, respectively, 4,235 and 5,744 reports identifying aspects of unfitting conduct submitted by official receivers and insolvency practitioners; 488 and 633 proceedings were authorised against individuals and 286 and 322 disqualification orders were made.

### Regional Air Links

**Mr. Luff:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the importance of air links between the regions and Heathrow to the local economies concerned; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** My Department recognises the importance air links to London can have for the local economies of the regions. This view is shared by the Department of Transport.

### British Aerospace

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the Office of Fair Trading has completed its investigation of the purchase of the British Manufacturing and Research Company by British Aerospace; and when he expects to receive the advice of the OFT.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The Director General of Fair Trading is continuing his inquiries into this acquisition and I expect his advice in due course.

### Insolvency Act 1986

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the President of The Board of Trade how many companies went into receivership under the Insolvency Act 1986, in each year since 1986 and in the current year to the most recent available date; how many directors of companies were prosecuted under the Act or similar statutory provisions over the same periods and *(a)* acquitted or *(b)* convicted; and what was the nature of the sentences passed on those convicted.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** The number of receiverships notified in each year beginning with 1986-87 and ending with January-March 1991 are published in "Companies in 1990-91" laid before Parliament in accordance with section 729 of the Companies Act 1985. A copy of table C2 from that publication follows, with available figures for April 1991 to March 1992 added.

Tables follow listing sections of the Insolvency Act 1986 creating offences in connection with companies, numbers of directors convicted and acquitted of each offence and the range of sentences passed. Similar tables show offences prosecuted under the Companies Acts 1948, 1976 and 1985 and the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

The tables relate to offences detected by official receivers dealing with companies in liquidation, and a small number detected by companies investigation branch, and prosecuted by investigations division of the Department of Trade and Industry. Separate tables are given for the calendar years 1988 to 1991. The figures include cases referred by investigations division to other agencies. They do not include cases investigated by police forces with no investigations division involvement. Bankruptcy offences prosecuted under the Insolvency Act 1986 have not been included whether or not the bankrupt had been a director of a company.

*Table C2 Liquidations and receiverships notified, 1986-87 to 1990-91*

*Number of companies*

| | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *Apr-Jun 1990* | *Jul-Sep 1990* | *Oct-Dec 1990* | *Jan-Mar 1991* | *Apr-May 1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Great Britain* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory liquidations | 5,163 | 3,911 | 3,789 | 4,511 | 7,043 | 1,342 | 1,047 | 2,512 | 2,142 | 9,210 |
| Creditor's voluntary liquidations | 9,412 | 7,064 | 6,011 | 6,981 | 10,610 | 2,118 | 2,365 | 2,697 | 3,430 | 14,124 |
| Total insolvencies | 14,575 | 10,975 | 9,800 | 11,492 | 17,653 | 3,460 | 3,412 | 5,209 | 5,572 | 0 |
| Members' voluntary liquidations | 5,115 | 2,834 | 4,063 | 4,215 | 4,172 | 1,088 | 835 | 1,053 | 1,196 | 0 |
| Total liquidations | 19,690 | 13,809 | 13,863 | 15,707 | 21,825 | 4,548 | 4,247 | 6,262 | 6,768 | 0 |
| Receiverships notified | 1,971 | 1,384 | 1,252 | 2,423 | 5,580 | 967 | 1,102 | 1,509 | 2,002 | 8759 |
| Administrator appointments | 3 | 156 | 187 | 160 | 237 | 67 | 57 | 49 | 64 | 0 |
| Company voluntary arrangements | 1 | 27 | 52 | 49 | 75 | 9 | 15 | 18 | 33 | 0 |
| *England and Wales* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory liquidations | 4,882 | 3,667 | 3,554 | 4,289 | 6,786 | 1,286 | 985 | 2,439 | 2,076 | 8,911 |
| Creditor's voluntary liquidations | 9,198 | 6,863 | 5,837 | 6,783 | 10,378 | 2,070 | 2,316 | 2,628 | 3,364 | 13,808 |
| Total insolvencies | 14,080 | 10,530 | 9,391 | 11,072 | 17,164 | 3,356 | 3,301 | 5,067 | 5,440 | 0 |
| Members' voluntary liquidations | 4,882 | 2,657 | 3,809 | 3,984 | 3,941 | 1,025 | 788 | 989 | 1,139 | 0 |
| Total liquidations | 18,962 | 13,187 | 13,200 | 15,056 | 21,105 | 4,381 | 4,089 | 6,056 | 6,579 | 0 |
| Receiverships notified | 1,769 | 1,202 | 1,133 | 2,266 | 5,327 | 925 | 1,045 | 1,430 | 1,927 | 8,503 |
| Administrator appointments | 0 | 144 | 179 | 162 | 222 | 65 | 56 | 41 | 60 | 0 |
| Company voluntary arrangements | 0 | 26 | 52 | 49 | 75 | 9 | 15 | 18 | 33 | 0 |
| *Scotland* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Compulsory liquidations | 281 | 244 | 235 | 222 | 257 | 56 | 62 | 73 | 66 | 299 |
| Creditors' voluntary liquidations | 214 | 201 | 174 | 198 | 232 | 48 | 49 | 69 | 66 | 316 |
| Total insolvencies | 495 | 445 | 409 | 420 | 489 | 104 | 111 | 142 | 132 | 0 |
| Members' voluntary liquidations | 233 | 177 | 254 | 231 | 231 | 63 | 47 | 64 | 57 | 0 |
| Total liquidations | 728 | 622 | 663 | 651 | 720 | 167 | 158 | 206 | 189 | 0 |
| Receiverships notified | 202 | 182 | 119 | 157 | 253 | 42 | 57 | 79 | 75 | 256 |
| Administrator appointments | 3 | 12 | 8 | 8 | 15 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 0 |
| Company voluntary arrangements | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Insolvency Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1988*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 216 | 1 | — | Fined £750 |

*Companies Acts*

*Calendar year 1988*

| Year and Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1948* | | | |
| S 161 | 1 | — | Fined £500 |
| S187 | 15 | — | Sentence ranged from six months in prison, fines up to £500 and 40 hour community service. |
| S 328 | 1 | — | Fined £500 |
| S 330 | 1 | — | Nine months suspended two years. |
| S 331 | 1 | — | Nine months imprisonment. |
| S 332 | 14 | 2 | Sentences ranged from four months imprisonment suspended to three years in prison. |
| *1976* | | | |
| S 12 | 47 | — | Fines ranged from £50 to £1,500 and from a conditional discharge to six months imprisonment. |
| *1985* | | | |
| S 34 | 2 | — | Fined £75 |
| S 221-223 | 26 | 3 | Sentence ranged from a conditional discharge with fines up to £1,600. |
| S 241 | 1 | — | Fined £500 |
| S 287 | 1 | — | Fined £25 |
| S 302 | 8 | — | Fines up to £500 and up to 3 months imprisonment. |
| S 458 | 4 | 2 | Sentences ranged from fines up to £250 and 18 months in prison. |
| S 624 | 1 | — | Six months imprisonment. |

*Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1988*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 11/13 | 2 | — | Conditional discharge and fines up to £100. |

*Insolvency Act 1986*

*For 1989*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 207 | 1 | — | Six months imprisonment suspended two years. |
| S 208 | — | 1 | — |
| S 216 | 6 | 1 | Conditional discharge to fines up to £1,000. |

*Companies Acts*

*Calendar year 1989*

| Year and Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1948* | | | |
| S 187 | 23 | — | Sentences ranged from a conditional discharge to 12 months imprisonment with fines up to £1,000. |
| S 332 | 7 | 1 | Sentences ranged from fines up to £2,000 and suspended prison sentences up to 18 months. |
| *1976* | | | |
| S 12 | 20 | — | Sentences ranged from a conditional discharge to 12 months imprisonment and fines between £50 to £1,000. |
| *1985* | | | |
| S 34 | 1 | — | Fined £200. |
| S 221/223 | 60 | 5 | Sentences ranged from a conditional discharge to three months imprisonment and fines between £100 to £500. |
| S 302 | 12 | 2 | Sentences ranged from community service up to 180 hours, fines between £400 to £1,000 and nine months imprisonment. |
| S 351 | 3 | — | Fined £50 to £100. |
| S 389 | 1 | — | Fined £500. |
| S 458 | 11 | — | Sentences ranged between 9-30 months imprisonment. |
| S 626 | 2 | — | Fined £400. |

*Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1989*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 11/13 | 2 | — | Fined between £75 and £750. |

*Insolvency Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1990*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 206 | 2 | 1 | Nine months suspended prison sentence. |
| S 216 | 4 | 1 | Fines up to £1,000 and up to four years disqualification from acting as a director. |

*Companies Acts*

*Calendar year 1990*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1948* | | | |
| S 187 | 9 | — | Fines ranged from £500 to £1,500 and suspended sentences up to 12 months. Disqualification up to five years. |
| S 221 | 1 | — | Fined £500. |
| S 323 | 1 | — | Four months imprisonment, suspended. |
| S 332 | 4 | — | Sentences ranged from suspended sentences to three and a half years imprisonment. |
| *1976* | | | |
| S 12 | 3 | — | Fines ranged between £500 to £1,500 and suspended prison sentences of three months. |
| S 13 | 1 | — | Fined £500. |
| *1985* | | | |
| S 28 | 2 | — | Fined £250. |
| S 34 | 2 | — | Fined up to £400. |

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 221-223 | 65 | 4 | Sentences ranged between a conditional discharge, 3-18 months suspended prison sentences and fines up to £2,000. Disqualification orders up to six years. |
| S 287 | 1 | — | Fined £200. |
| S 302 | 13 | 1 | Sentences ranged between suspended prison sentences and six months imprisonment. |
| S 351 | 2 | — | Fines up to £1,000 and 160 hours community service, up to five years disqualification. |
| S 389 | 1 | — | Fined £100. |
| S 458 | 15 | 3 | Sentence ranged between two to six months suspended and three years imprisonment, fines up to £10,000, and disqualifications up to seven years. |

*Company Directors Disqualifcation Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1990*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 11/13 | 17 | 1 | Sentences ranged between a conditional discharge and 12 months suspended prison sentence. Fines up to £1,500 and disqualification from acting as a director up to 10 years. |

*Insolvency Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1991*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 206 | 1 | — | Conditional discharge. |
| S 207 | 1 | — | Six months imprisonment, suspended for two years. |
| S 216 | 6 | 1 | Sentences ranged from absolute discharge, fines up to £750, imprisonment up to three months and disqualification as acting as a director for two years. |

*Companies Act*

*Calendar year 1991*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| *1976* | | | |
| S 12 | 2 | 2 | Fines of £150 and disqualification from acting as a director of 10 years. |
| *1985* | | | |
| S 28 | 1 | — | Fined £500. |
| S 34 | 1 | — | Fined £400. |
| S 64 | 1 | 2 | Fined £150. |
| S 187 | 7 | — | Sentences range from 12 months imprisonment suspended for two years, fines up to £300 and disqualification of up to five years. |
| S 221-223 | 40 | 13 | Sentences range from an absolute discharge, fines up to £1,000, 200 hours community service, suspended prison sentences of two years and disqualification of up to five years. |
| S 302 | 12 | — | Sentences range from a conditional discharge, fines up to £50, suspended prison sentences of nine months and disqualification up to 18 months. |
| S 389 | 1 | — | Fined £200. |
| S 458 | 8 | 3 | Sentences ranged from suspended sentences to three and a half years imprisonment and disqualification up to seven years. |
| S 624 | 1 | — | Fined £1,000. |

*Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986*

*Calendar year 1991*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 11/13 | 33 | — | Sentences ranged from 240 hours community service, fines up to £5,000, suspended prison sentences and up to six months imprisonment and disqualification from acting as a director for up to 10 years. |

*Insolvency Act 1986*

*To end May 1992*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 206 | 3 | — | Sentences up to 12 months imprisonment suspended for two years and disqualification as acting as a director for three years. |
| S 208 | 1 | — | Conditional discharge. |
| S 213 | 2 | — | Sentences included imprisonment up to 21 months, and disqualification up to 10 years. |

*Companies Act 1985*

*To end May 1992*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 34 | 1 | — | Fined £25. |
| S 221-223 | 25 | — | Sentence ranged from a conditional discharge, fines up to £1,500, community service orders of 150 hours, suspended prison sentences and disqualification up to 10 years. |
| S 302 | 2 | — | Conditional discharge and a suspended prison sentence of 2 months. |
| S 389 | 1 | — | Fined £1,000 |
| S 458 | 2 | 4 | Up to nine months imprisonment, suspended for two years and disqualification of five years. |

*Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986*

*To end May 1992*

| Section | Convicted | Acquitted | Sentence range |
|---|---|---|---|
| S 13 | 14 | — | Sentences ranged from a conditional discharge, fines up to £1,200, 15 months suspended prison sentence and disqualification as acting as a director of up to five years. |

## British Coal

**Mr. Tipping:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those individuals and organisations who responded to his consultation about the privatisation of British Coal; and if he will place copies of the documents in the Library.

**Mr. Eggar:** The following organisations and individuals have sent me their views on the form and timing of coal privatisation:

AMCO Corporation plc.
Association of British Mining Equipment Companies.
Association of County Councils.
British Association of Colliery Management.
Caledonian Mining Group.
Chamber of Coal Traders.
Clay Colliery Company Ltd.
Coalfield Communities Campaign.
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.
Council for the Protection of Rural England.
Domestic Coal Consumers Council
WMS Dugdale
Federation of Small Mines.
The Lord Forrester.
GMB/APEX Partnership.
Health and Safety Commission.
Institution of Mining Engineers.
Mining Association of the UK.
Monktonhall Mineworkers Ltd./Alex Morrison and Co.
NACODS.
National Power plc.
National Rivers Authority.
National Union of Mineworkers (C.O.S.A.).
National Union of Mineworkers (Scotland).
North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council.
Nuclear Electric plc.
PowerGen plc.
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.
Scottish Trades Union Congress.
J. J. Sheridan.
J. S. Sumnall.
Town and Country Planning Association.
Trades Union Congress.
Union of Democratic Mineworkers.
United Kingdom Onshore Operators Group.
E. H. L. & J. G. C. Wallace.

I have placed the full list of the organisations to whom I wrote in the libraries of the House.

It is a matter for the organisations and individuals concerned whether they wish their correspondence to be made public.

## Steel

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of steel production in 1971, 1981 and 1991.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** The level of United Kingdom crude steel production was 24·2 million tonnes in 1971, 15·6 million tonnes in 1981 and 16·5 million tonnes in 1991.

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the steelmaking centres in Wales in 1971, 1981 and 1991.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Centres of crude steel production in Wales are as follows:

1971
Port Talbot
Llanwern
Cardiff
Shotton
Ebbw Vale
Wrexham
Panteg
Briton Ferry
Llanelli

1981
Port Talbot
Llanwern
Cardiff
Wrexham
Panteg

1991
Port Talbot
Llanwern
Cardiff
Panteg
Newport

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many were engaged in steelmaking in 1971, 1981 and 1991 in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Approximate numbers engaged in crude steel production were as follows:

| | *1972* | *1981* | *1991* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wales | 61,000 | 25,000 | 17,000 |
| Great Britain | 201,000 | 88,000 | 45,000 |

Note: Comparative figures for 1971 are not available.

## Bankruptcies, Leeds

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the number of bankruptcies in businesses employing fewer than 50 people in the Leeds, West constituency for each of the past five years; and, in each case, how many redundancies occurred.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton:** My Department does not maintain such statistics.

## Regional Aid

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a table of expenditure on regional financial assistance to each development area and intermediate area in the north-west region in each year since the last revision of the assisted areas held in 1984 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1984 prices.

**Mr. Sainsbury:** Expenditure on regional financial assistance in the north-west region broken down into development areas and intermediate areas from 1984-85 at current prices and at 1984-85 prices is set out in the table. The schemes covered in the table are regional development grants, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants. A more detailed breakdown by assisted area is available only at disproportionate cost.

*Regional Financial Assistance*

| | *1984-85* | *1985-86* | *1986-87* | *1987-88* | *1988-89* | *1989-90* | *1990-91* | *1991-92* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *North West Region at current prices* | | | | | | | | |
| DA | 121·2 | 93·6 | 127·4 | 64·2 | 62·3 | 52·2 | 41·1 | 30·4 |
| IA | 3·1 | 4·3 | 6·0 | 7·1 | 10·0 | 10·8 | 8·4 | 8·7 |

| | 1984-85 | 1985-86 | 1986-87 | 1987-88 | 1988-89 | 1989-90 | 1990-91 | 1991-92 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *North West Region at 1984-85 prices* | | | | | | | | |
| DA | 121·2 | 88·7 | 116·9 | 55·9 | 50·6 | 39·7 | 28·9 | 20·0 |
| IA | 3·1 | 4·1 | 5·5 | 6·2 | 8·1 | 8·2 | 5·9 | 5·7 |

*Note*:—The table comprises expenditure on Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants.

## Ozone-depleting Chemicals

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will outline his Department's policy on recovery and recycling of ozone-depleting chemicals.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The Government encourage recycling wherever it makes economic and environmental sense by setting the right legislative framework and stimulating both the recovery and take-up of recyclable materials. The Department also seeks to alert business through literature, and other promotional activity, to the benefits of recovering and reusing ozone-depleting substances.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's policy on purchasing ozone-depleting chemicals and goods manufactured with these substances; and in which year his Department expects to cease using, purchasing or releasing ozone-depleting substances, controlled by the Montreal protocol, and HCFCs.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The Department has already ceased to purchase some goods manufactured with ozone-depleting chemicals and will continue to reduce purchases of such goods and substances as and when suitable alternative technologies and products become available. The Department has also introduced control measures to eliminate the unnecessary release of these substances to the atmosphere.

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the amount in tonnes of ozone-depleting chemicals used or purchased by his Department for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, and estimates of usage for the next year; what is the estimated bank of ozone-depleting chemicals contained within his Department; and how many months' supply of ozone-depleting chemicals have been ordered by his Department.

**Mr. Leigh** *[holding answer 22 June 1992]:* The information is not available. However my Department is committed to eliminating its use of ozone-depleting substances where suitable alternatives are available. The DTI, along with other Government Departments, has adopted the "Environmental Action Guide for Building and Purchasing Managers" published in 1991—ISBN 011 752 3119—which aims for a high quality of environmental performance in the public procurement of goods and services.

## HEALTH

### Chiropodists

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chiropodists are employed by the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authorities at the present time and for each year since 1988.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is as follows:

*NHS Chiropodists Whole-Time Equivalent*

| | *Hartlepool* | *Sunderland* | *Durham* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 3·4 | 12·6 | 10·5 |
| 1989 | 5·1 | 16·1 | 7·6 |
| 1990 | 5·6 | 16·4 | 8·4 |
| 1991 | 5·6 | 16·4 | 7·0 |

### Physiotherapy

**Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many physiotherapists were employed in the Sunderland, Durham and Hartlepool health authorities each year since 1988.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is as follows:

*NHS Physiotherapists Whole-Time Equivalent*

| | *Hartlepool* | *Sunderland* | *Durham* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 24·2 | 32·4 | 64·2 |
| 1989 | 28·2 | 66·0 | 32·4 |
| 1990 | 30·5 | 34·1 | 67·1 |
| 1991 | 22·0 | 58·64 | 42·0 |

### Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many suspected cases of Creutzfeld-Jakob disease have been *(a)* identified and *(b)* confirmed as actually suffering from this disease in the past two months;

(2) how many people have been identified as having contracted Creutzfeld-Jakob disease from the most recently available figures.

**Mr. Yeo:** Figures are produced on a yearly basis by Dr. R. G. Wills, consultant neurologist at the national Creutzfeld-Jakob disease surveillance unit, Edinburgh. Copies of his latest report "Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease surveillance in the United Kingdom" have been placed in the Library. Dr. Wills has confirmed that there has been no change in the incidence or distribution of CJD, and no evidence to show that it is increasing. The study into the incidence of CJD will continue for a decade or more to monitor any change in the pattern of the disease.

CJD can be confirmed only by post mortem. Between 1 April 1992 and 31 May 1992 four suspect cases of CJD were identified. One of the patients has been confirmed as suffering from the disease; two other patients remain alive and a post mortem result on the fourth patient is awaited.

### NHS Staff

**Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors and nurses currently work for the national health service.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** At 30 September 1990, the latest date for which figures are available centrally, there were 44,900 (whole-time equivalent) doctors and 402,100 (whole-time equivalent) nurses employed by national health service health authorities and trusts. These figures are rounded to the nearest hundred whole-time equivalents and include all permanent paid and honorary medical staff in hospital and community health services, hospital practitioners, part-time medical officers and agency nurses.

### Dentistry

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide annual statistics on the number of dental practitioners in the Wirral and the volume of treatments they have given for the last five years, broken down into the standard categories used by her department.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is shown in the table:

*Wirral family health services authority*

| *Financial year* | *Number of dentists* | *Number of courses of treatment* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Children* | *Adults* | *All patients* |
| 1987-88 | 113 | 79,280 | 164,940 | 244,220 |
| 1988-89 | 117 | 80,810 | 173,620 | 254,430 |
| 1989-90 | 125 | 76,935 | 165,559 | 242,494 |
| 1990-91 | 130 | 60,381 | 162,284 | 222,665 |
| 1991-92 | 136 | 24,651 | 178,510 | 203,161 |

*Notes:*

1. The number of dentists includes principals and assistants as at 30 September in each year.
2. The apparent decline in the number of courses of treatment provided for children is misleading. Under the new general dental service contract introduced in October 1990, most child treatment is undertaken under capitation and, as such, these courses of treatment cannot be separately identified or counted.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide the latest statistics on the level of dental health amongst the population of the Wirral.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Information is not collected centrally in the form requested. The most recent surveys, co-ordinated by the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD), (in 1989-90 and 1988-89 respectively) showed that five and 12-year-olds in Wirral health authority had respectively 2·25 and 1·77 decayed, missing or filled teeth. Wirral ranked 151st in a list of 178 health authorities for five-year-olds and 115th in a list of 154 for 12-year-olds.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how long waiting lists for orthodontic treatment in the Wirral are currently; and what the waiting list has been in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Sackville:** There were no patients waiting for orthodontic treatment with Wirral Hospital NHS Trust at 30 September 1991. Wirral district health authority had no patients waiting for this treatment at 30 September in each of the last five years. (Source: KH07 returns).

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the actual earnings of dentists have been *(a)* in the Wirral and *(b)* nationally in each of the past five years; and how this earnings information is calculated within the existing payments system.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is shown in the table:

*Average gross fee earnings per dentist (£)*

| Financial Year | Wirral | England and Wales |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 55,052 | 55,971 |
| 1988-89 | 61,210 | 64,377 |
| 1989-90 | 60,681 | 64,008 |
| 1990-91 | 66,090 | 70,410 |
| 1991-92 | 84,906 | 84,833 |

These averages relate only to earnings through fees and to dentists in the dental rates study group population. They exclude maternity payments, sickness payments, postgraduate education allowances, reimbursed business rates and other such allowances, and they relate only to those dentists who, for the year in question, were in contract for the complete financial year.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists have ceased to practise in the national health service by switching exclusively to private work since 1979.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is not available. There are currently 29 per cent. more dentists practising in the general dental services in England than there were in 1979.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the dental treatments given on the national health service in the last financial year cost over *(a)* £200 and *(b)* £600, expressed as both a number and a percentage of the total treatments administered.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** Data for 1991-92 are not yet available. The information for England and Wales in the calendar year 1991 is shown in the table:

| Cost of treatment | Number of treatments | Percentage of total number |
|---|---|---|
| Greater than £200 | 625,960 | 2·2 |
| Greater than £600 | 38,178 | 0·1 |

*Note:* Figures are provided by the Dental Practice Board.

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were *(a)* the numbers employed by and *(b)* the total operational cost of the Dental Practices Board and its predecessors over the last three financial years together with an estimate of *(b)* for the current year.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** The information requested is as follows:

| Year | [1] Staff | Cost (£ million) |
|---|---|---|
| 1989-90 | 1,268 | 16·8 |
| 1990-91 | 1,220 | 21·2 |
| 1991-92 | 1,126 | 22·6 |

[1] Average number of whole time equivalents.

The present budget allocation for 1992-93 is £24·1 million. We are at present discussing with the board the implications of any additional work that might fall to them from proposed amendments to the level at which dentists should seek prior approval from the board for courses of treatment to be undertaken. The costs of the Dental Practice Board are shared between the Department of Health and the Welsh Office on a proportional basis.

## Psychiatric Hospitals

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received about the safety of women in psychiatric hospitals;

(2) what measures are being taken to ensure the safety of women in psychiatric hospitals; and what guidance is provided to health authorities on the procedures and policy that they should follow to prevent and deal with sexual assaults and harassment in mental health settings.

**Mr. Sackville:** No representations about the safety of women in psychiatric hospitals have been received. It is the responsibility of individual health authorities and local managers to develop strategies which will help to provide a safe and secure environment for patients and staff. All health authorities were asked in 1982 to develop comprehensive security strategies and to keep them under review.

A new national health service security manual, which provides excellent advice on all aspects of hospital security, has been issued to health authorities and trusts. A copy of the manual is available in the Library.

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are taken to ensure that women who have experienced sexual assault or harassment in psychiatric hospitals are encouraged to make a complaint.

**Mr. Yeo:** The hospital complaints procedure is available to all patients who are unhappy about aspects of their care and treatment. Health authorities have been asked to include information about how to make a complaint in admission booklets, leaflets and notices. In the case of a complaint about a potential criminal offence, the district general manager must be consulted, and if the allegation is serious and substantial the police must be notified immediately.

## Agency Nurses

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated annual cost to the national health service of having agency nurses.

**Mr. Sackville:** The summarised accounts of health authorities in England for 1990-91 (the latest available) record total expenditure on the employment of non-National Health Service (agency etc.) nursing staff as £120·7 million (cash). This represents some 2·2 per cent. of total nursing and midwifery pay costs. The comparable figures for 1989-90 were £135·0 million (cash) and 2·7 per cent. respectively.

## Romanian Adoptions

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether her Department sought the removal of the condition relating to the number of children in a prospective adopting family imposed on prospective adopting parents wishing to adopt a child from Romania *(a)* in discussions between her Department and the Romanian Committee for Adoptions between January and March and *(b)* when a team of officials from her Department visited Romania and conducted direct negotiations prior to 19 March;

(2) whether her Department sought the removal of the age condition for prospective adopting parents wishing to

adopt a child from Romania *(a)* in discussions between her Department and the Romanian Committee for Adoptions between January and March and *(b)* when a team of officials from her Department visited Romania and conducted direct negotiations prior to 19 March.

**Mr. Yeo:** The conditions contained in the draft agreement prepared by the Romanian Committee for Adoptions were the subject of negotiations between the Department and the committee from January to March this year.

The conditions in the draft agreement relating to an upper age limit of prospective adopters and the number of children who were already members of a prospective adopting family were two of the many issues where the Department of Health sought removal or, failing that, some measure of flexibility.

The negotiating team continued to pursue amendments to these and other conditions with the committee on their visit to Romania in March. On the specific conditions referred to, the committee agreed to relax the limit on the number of children already members of a family in respect of the adoption of a Romanian child joining their brother or sister. The committee also agreed to relax the upper age limit only for the adoption of children with special needs.

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the *(a)* names, *(b)* grades and *(c)* posts held in her Department of the officials who visited Romania in March to negotiate with the Romanian Committee for Adoptions.

**Mr. Yeo:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Name* | *Grade* | *Post* |
|---|---|---|
| Michael Brennan | Principal | Policy for adoption, including inter-country adoption |
| Miss Julia Ridgway | Social services inspector | Professional adviser on adoption issues |
| Dr. Susan Shepherd | Senior medical officer | Paediatric adviser on all aspects of adoption, including overseas adoption |

## Census

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the timetable for the publication of the 1991 census.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 18 June at column *672*.

## GPs (Staff Pay)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the percentage rise offered to general practitioners for reimbursement of staff wages in 1992 by each family health services authority.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not held centrally.

## Electorate

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out in tabular form the average electorate per constituency in Hertfordshire for 1962, 1972, 1982 and 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is as follows:

*Average electorate per parliamentary constituency in Hertfordshire*

| *Area* | *1962* | *1972* | *1982* | *1992* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hertfordshire* | | | | |
| Number of electors | 551,240 | 655,592 | 723,810 | 745,795 |
| Number of constituencies | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 |
| Average electorate per constituency | 68,905 | 72,844 | 80,423 | 74,580 |

*Note:* There have been changes since 1962 in the boundaries of Hertfordshire; but local authority changes are not immediately reflected in changes to constituency boundaries.
*Source:* Population estimates unit, OPCS.

## Residential Homes

**Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that *(a)* children and young people, *(b)* adult and elderly volunteers and *(c)* residents are not precluded from participation in catering and cooking at residential homes and sheltered accommodation for the elderly when such participation is aimed at creating a homely or community atmosphere for the residents.

**Mr. Sackville:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 19 June at column *708*.

## Disability Allowances

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 16 June, *Official Report*, column *479*, if she will list the health benefits which people claiming disability working allowance are entitled to by virtue of receiving the allowance.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** None.

## Fertility Treatment

**Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for health how many women who received fertility treatment in the last year were in their late 30s or early 40s; of these, how many were in low income brackets; and whether she has any plans to improve the availability of fertility treatment.

**Mr. Sackville:** Information about the age groups and income of women who received fertility treatment during 1991 is not available centrally. The Government are aware of the position of childless couples and the national health service provides a wide range of services to help them. However, decisions about the priority and resources to be given to fertility services must be left to individual health authorities.

### Electorate

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out in tabular form the average electorate per constituency in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales for 1962, 1972, 1982 and 1992.

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested for England and Wales is shown in the table. Information relating to Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

*Average electorate per parliamentary constituency*
*England and Wales*

| | 1962 | 1972 | 1982 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *England* | | | | |
| Number of electors | 29,589,260 | 33,316,464 | 35,363,733 | 36,435,873 |
| Number of constituencies | 511 | 516 | 516 | 524 |
| Average electorate per constituency | 57,905 | 64,567 | 68,534 | 69,534 |
| *Wales* | | | | |
| Number of electors | 1,804,483 | 1,997,400 | 2,127,935 | 2,218,551 |
| Number of constituencies | 36 | 36 | 36 | 38 |
| Average electorate per constituency | 50,125 | 55,483 | 59,109 | 58,383 |

*Source:* Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

### Dentists Remuneration

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the remuneration of NHS dentists.

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** *[pursuant to the reply, 2 June 1992, Official Report, columns 466-67]:* I have today authorised an amendment to the statement of dental remuneration to implement changes to the dental fee scale from 8 July 1992. We anticipate that this will not only deliver the increase in the target average net income to £35,815 which the review body recommended but that dentists should on average receive some £5,000 in addition. I have also increased the allowance for expenses to £47,228, an increase of 11·6 per cent.

I shall be laying regulations to amend the NHS (General Dental Services) Regulations to reduce to £200 the threshold of treatment costs above which dentists must seek prior approval from the Dental Practice Board before carrying out treatment. This will improve our monitoring of costs of general dental services. Only some 3 per cent. of courses will be covered by this adjustment but it is right that dentists should seek approval for these costly treatments.

Taken together, this means that dentists will receive an average gross income of around £88,000, including expenses.

My decisions were made in the light of all the available considerations. We have taken into account the points put to us by dentists and their representatives. In some respects —for instance in the field of orthodontics—the fee scale has been amended to take account of their representations. This will mean that most of the work done by orthodontists can be carried out without prior approval.

There will be a consequent reduction in the charges paid by patients.

These changes are fair and reasonable and strike the right balance between the needs of patients, dentists and other health service workers.

We have made good progress in dental health in recent years. This was recognised by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body in recommending an increase in pay of 8·5 per cent.—far more than that recommended for any other large health group. I remind dentists that our proposals mean that they will receive £5,000 over and above that.

Dentists should think long and hard before taking any action which jeopardises this progress, and which could discourage people from seeking dental care in the future.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Youth Training

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are on the waiting lists for youth training places in south London.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is not available.

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken part in youth training schemes in each year since 1988 in south London.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information is not available in the precise form requested. Available information on entrants to youth training in south London is given in the table.

*Number of young people taking part in youth training schemes in south London*
*First time entrants during the financial year*

| | Inner London south and south London area offices[3] | South Thames TEC and SOLOTEC[3] |
|---|---|---|
| 1987-88 | 6,895 | • |
| 1988-89 | 6,252 | • |
| 1989-90 | 5,718 | • |
| 1990-91[1] | n/a | n/a |
| 1991-92[2] | • | 4,119 |

*Notes:*
[1] Reliable data not available at this level.
[2] Estimated—subject to revision and includes reentrants.
[3] The geographical areas covered by the previous Area Offices and the current TECS are not coterminous.

*Sources:* 1987-88 to 1989-90: SPECTRUM Management Information System.
1991-92: OSMOSIS Management Information System.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response she has made to the findings of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the extent of the delivery of the youth training guarantee.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** We take the matters raised in the recent Social Security Advisory Committee report very seriously. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has written to the chairman of the committee underlining the Government's commitment to making the youth training guarantee work. Along with the training and enterprise councils, we shall be monitoring the operation of the system very closely over the coming months.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average amount left over from the youth training unit price after the allowance has been deducted.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training places there are in the London borough of Newham; and what were the comparable figures last year.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information regarding the number of youth training places available in the London borough of Newham is not collected.

Since 1 April 1991, training in Newham has been the responsibility of London East training and enterprise council, LETEC. At 29 March 1992, there were an estimated 4,800 people in training on youth training in the LETEC area.

**Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the unit price of youth training places in *(a)* London East training and enterprise council and *(b)* West London training and enterprise council.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Information regarding unit prices is commercial in confidence and a matter for the relevant training and enterprise councils to answer.

**Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in employment or education are not currently on youth training programmes in Cheltenham.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I understand from the local careers service which covers the Cheltenham area that there are currently 132 young people in the area who are registered with the service as not in employment or education who are not in YT.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training scheme places have been lost due to bankruptcies in businesses employing *(a)* fewer than 50 people and *(b)* more than 50 people in each of the last five years; and how many of these youth training schemes have been replaced.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** This information is not available.

## Youth Unemployment

**Ms. Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment among 16 and 17-year-olds in south London.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Information on unemployment by age is available only on a quarterly basis. The latest information relates to April 1992 and shows that on the unadjusted basis there was a total of 362 claimant unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds in the area covered by the 33 London parliamentary constituencies located south of the River Thames.

## Health and Safety Commission

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether she intends to maintain trade union representation at the present level on the Health and Safety Commission.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** I have no plans at present to change the level of trades union representation on the Health and Safety Commission.

## Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 9 June *Official Report*, column *139*, if she will give the equivalent figures for employment training and youth training, in 1991-92 and 1992-93 for the Tyneside training and enterprise council.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Tyneside TEC's budgets for 1992-93 are £17,041,993 for YT and £20,110,963 for ET. This compares to £21,454,645 and £23,270,176 respectively for 1991-92

## Income Support

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence she has received of incorrect advice being given by unemployment benefit office staff to unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds regarding their entitlement to income support.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

## Labour Statistics

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide a table of the number of employees in employment in January 1979 and January 1992 by standard region, showing Greater London separately, and showing the percentage change.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The numbers of employees in employment by standard region are available on a quarterly basis. Separate figures for Greater London were not produced before September 1981. The available information is as follows:

*Employees in employment* *Not seasonally adjusted*

| Region | December 1978 | December 1991 | Percentage change |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (000's) | | |
| South East (including Greater London) | 7,450 | 7,156 | −4 |
| Greater London | [1]n.a. | 3,196 | n.a. |
| East Anglia | 693 | 791 | 14 |
| South West | 1,565 | 1,719 | 10 |
| West Midlands | 2,252 | 1,954 | −13 |
| East Midlands | 1,558 | 1,567 | 1 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 2,006 | 1,855 | −7 |
| North West | 2,696 | 2,369 | −12 |
| North | 1,246 | 1,088 | −13 |
| Wales | 1,022 | 958 | −6 |
| Scotland | 2,075 | 1,985 | −4 |

[1]In September 1981 there were 3,567,000 employees in employment in Greater London.
n.a. = Not available.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been employed in *(a)* the textile and clothing industries, *(b)* the aerospace industry, *(c)* the motor vehicle manufacturing industry, *(d)* the construction industry and *(e)* the machine tool manufacturing industry in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total employed work force each of these figures represents in that year.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** Employment estimates are classified according to the standard industrial classification 1980 —SIC 80. The available information is in the tables.

*Employees in employment—Unadjusted for Seasonal Variation*
*Great Britain*

| December | Textiles and Clothing (Class 43, Groups 453/456, 455) Thousands | Textiles and Clothing (Class 43, Groups 453/456, 455) Percentage of all industries | Motor Vehicle Manufacture (Class 35) Thousands | Motor Vehicle Manufacture (Class 35) Percentage of all industries |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 515·2 | 2·4 | 336·7 | 1·6 |
| 1982 | 483·9 | 2·3 | 302·5 | 1·4 |
| 1983 | 476·7 | 2·3 | 283·6 | 1·3 |
| 1984 | 476·7 | 2·3 | 273·1 | 1·3 |
| 1985 | 486·9 | 2·3 | 269·2 | 1·3 |
| 1986 | 477·3 | 2·3 | 255·6 | 1·2 |
| 1987 | 477·8 | 2·2 | 264·5 | 1·3 |
| 1988 | 471·7 | 2·1 | 271·1 | 1·3 |
| 1989 | 438·7 | 2·0 | 267·7 | 1·2 |
| 1990 | 412·0 | 1·9 | 239·6 | 1·1 |
| 1991 | 390·6 | 1·8 | 222·7 | 1·1 |

*Construction (Division 5)*

| December | Thousands | Percentage of all industries |
|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 1,041·1 | 4·9 |
| 1982 | 1,030·3 | 4·9 |
| 1983 | 1,025·7 | 4·9 |
| 1984 | 1,015·8 | 4·8 |
| 1985 | 978·6 | 4·6 |
| 1986 | 967·7 | 4·6 |
| 1987 | 1,004·8 | 4·8 |
| 1988 | 1,022·2 | 4·8 |
| 1989 | 1,038·2 | 5·0 |
| 1990 | 1,010·6 | 4·8 |
| 1991 | 878·0 | 4·2 |

*Employees in employment*
*Great Britain*
*Unadjusted for seasonal variation*

| December | Aerospace and other transport equipment (Groups 362-365)[1] Thousands | Aerospace and other transport equipment (Groups 362-365)[1] Percentage of all industries | Other transport equipment including aerospace (Class 36)[1] Thousands | Other transport equipment including aerospace (Class 36)[1] Percentage of all industries |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 231·4 | 1·1 | 347·8 | 1·6 |
| 1982 | 217·1 | 1·0 | 328·3 | 1·6 |
| 1983 | 204·6 | 1·0 | 305·3 | 1·4 |
| 1984 | 199·3 | 0·9 | 284·7 | 1·3 |
| 1985 | 197·7 | 0·9 | 272·0 | 1·3 |
| 1986 | 191·7 | 0·9 | 257·2 | 1·2 |
| 1987 | 185·5 | 0·9 | 241·7 | 1·1 |
| 1988 | 177·0 | 0·8 | 224·3 | 1·1 |
| [2]1989 | 197·1 | 0·9 | 240·4 | 1·1 |
| 1989 | n/a | n/a | 243·2 | 1·2 |
| 1990 | n/a | n/a | 244·0 | 1·2 |
| 1991 | n/a | n/a | 223·7 | 1·1 |

[1] Aerospace employment is not separately identifiable. From September 1989, information is only available for class 36 as a whole.
[2] September 1989. Latest available and comparable.

| December | Metal working machine tools and engineers' tools (Group 322)[1] Thousands | Metal working machine tools and engineers' tools (Group 322)[1] Percentage of all industries | Mechanical engineering including machine tools (Class 32)[1] Thousands | Mechanical engineering including machine tools (Class 32)[1] Percentage of all industries |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1981 | 93·2 | 0·4 | 877·0 | 4·2 |
| 1982 | 82·9 | 0·4 | 803·3 | 3·8 |
| 1983 | 75·4 | 0·4 | 755·2 | 3·6 |
| 1984 | 75·9 | 0·4 | 753·3 | 3·6 |
| 1985 | 78·0 | 0·4 | 757·4 | 3·6 |
| 1986 | 73·3 | 0·3 | 733·8 | 3·5 |
| 1987 | 74·2 | 0·4 | 746·4 | 3·5 |
| 1988 | 73·9 | 0·4 | 778·6 | 3·7 |
| [2]1989 | 72·6 | 0·3 | 757·4 | 3·4 |
| 1989 | n/a | n/a | 761·2 | 3·6 |
| 1990 | n/a | n/a | 723·7 | 3·4 |
| 1991 | n/a | n/a | 673·1 | 3·2 |

[1] Machine tools employment is not separately identifiable. From September 1989, information is only available for class 32 as a whole.
[2] September 1989. Latest available and comparable.

## Crown Notice

**Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment who is reviewing the current Crown notice procedure; what are the remit and requirements of that review; and when she expects it to be completed.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The Health and Safety Executive is reviewing the procedure of serving Crown notices for

infringement of health and safety legislation by public bodies, as required by the principles set out in the "Immunities" section of the citizens charter, page 46. It will report in due course to the Health and Safety Commission which will, if appropriate, make recommendations to Ministers.

## 48-hour Week

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of male and female workers who would be prevented from working more than 48 hours per week under the working hours directive; in which industries they work; and what evidence she has on whether their health and safety has been jeopardised by working more than 48 hours a week.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The EC directive on working time as currently drafted would prevent employees in most industries from working more than 48 hours a week on average over a three-month period. The latest available statistics for employees usually working more than 48 paid hours a week in the United Kingdom are as follows:

| *Industry*[1] | *All employees* | *Men* | *Women* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *(000's)* | |
| All industries | 2,416 | 2,145 | 271 |
| 0. Agriculture, forestry, etc. | 79 | 71 | —[2] |
| 1. Energy and water supply | 94 | 93 | —[2] |
| 2. Mineral extraction, etc. | 114 | 112 | —[2] |
| 3. Metal goods, etc. | 315 | 302 | 14 |
| 4. Other manufacturing | 258 | 231 | 27 |
| 5. Construction | 212 | 208 | —[2] |
| 6. Hotels, distribution, etc. | 410 | 343 | 67 |
| 7. Transport and communication | 335 | 314 | 21 |
| 8. Financial services, etc. | 187 | 166 | 21 |
| 9. Other services | 403 | 297 | 106 |

*Source:* United Kingdom Labour Force Survey 1991.

[1] By Standard Industrial Classification Divisions. Figures for 'all employees' include those whose industry is unknown or whose workplace is outside the United Kingdom.

[2] Denotes sample too small to provide a reliable estimate.

The directive as currently drafted excludes from its scope air, sea, road and rail transport, and sea fishing. If these exclusions are adopted certain employees in divisions 0 and 7 would not be prevented by the directive from working more than 48 hours a week. The EC Commission has said that it will introduce specific proposals on working time for any sectors excluded from the working time directive.

I have no evidence that the health and safety of workers who work more than 48 hours a week has been jeopardised. Nor has the European Commission or any other member state provided any. During the survey reference week on which the statistics are based 4·9 per cent. of employees who usually work up to 48 hours a week were reported as absent due to sickness or injury, whereas only 3·9 per cent. of workers who usually work over 48 hours a week were absent for this reason.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the average earnings of those working more than 48 hours a week, by distribution of trade or profession, together with the estimate of the fall in earnings which would result from a reduction to 48 hours.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The 1991 new earnings survey provided information on the average weekly earnings of employees who work more than 48 hours per week. The results for the nine major occupational groups of the standard occupational classification are as follows:

*Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates of pay whose pay was unaffected by absence and who worked for more than 48 hours per week*

| *Occupation* | *Average weekly earnings (£)* |
|---|---|
| Managers and Administrators | 382·4 |
| Professional Occupations | 519·2 |
| Associate Professional and Technical Occupations | 460·3 |
| Clerical and Secretarial | 305·1 |
| Craft and Related | 369·5 |
| Personal and Protective Service Occupations | 281·3 |
| Sales Occupations | 271·4 |
| Plant and Machine Operatives | 309·5 |
| Other Occupations | 288·2 |
| All Occupations | 333·0 |

*Source:* New Earnings Survey 1991.

A memorandum presenting estimates of the initial cost of compliance with the draft directive on working time has been placed in the Library. This memorandum estimates the total wage cost of paid hours currently worked in excess of 48 hours a week to be £7 billion. Half of this cost is assumed to be borne by employers through increased labour costs. The other £3·5 billion is assumed to be borne by affected employees either through lower weekly earnings or through working harder for no financial reward. The pay packets of up to 2·5 million employees could be affected.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what grounds the EC is considering a 48-hour maximum working week.

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** A draft directive on working time has been put forward by the EC Commission on the basis of article 118a of the treaty of Rome, which concerns the health and safety of workers; this is unacceptable to the Government. The Commission's original proposals did not include provision for a maximum 48-hour working week. This provision was introduced subsequently because some member states assert that it is necessary to place a maximum limit on weekly working hours in order to ensure the health and safety of Community workers. I am not aware of any evidence to support this claim, nor for the choice of 48 hours as the limit.

## Training

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will provide a table of expenditure on each of her Department's training programmes broken down by programme and cross-referenced to standard regions, showing Greater London as a separate region, for each year from 1987-88 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1987-88 prices.

**Mr. McLoughlin:** The information requested is shown in the tables.

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# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 210**

## SESSION 1992–93

*22nd June—3rd July 1992*

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## SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

### *Scope and arrangement of the Index*

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

### *Abbreviations*

*Bills* 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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